

POETRY
A MAGAZINE OF VERSE
VOLUME L



Poetry

A Magazine of Verse

Founded by Harriet Monroe

VOLUME L

April, 1937—September, 1937



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CHICAGO

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Poetry

A Magazine of Verse

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To the above ladies and gentlemen, who have remained loyal to *POETRY* and its purposes over many years; to the Friday Club and Society of Midland Authors, who have donated prizes and other benefits; and particularly to the Carnegie Corporation of New York, whose generous gifts have enabled *POETRY* to continue during the past four years of financial difficulty, the editors of the magazine would express their deep gratitude and that of the poets we have published.

Special thanks are due also to Mr. Charles Leviton, of Chicago, who founded last year a new annual prize of one hundred dollars in memory of a friend, the Oscar Blumenthal Prize for Poetry, awarded for the first time last November; and to the friends and family of Jeannette Sewell Davis, who have twice made possible the giving of a prize in her honor, and who now wish us to announce that this heretofore biennial prize will be given every year. We are further indebted to Marion Strobel of Chicago for making it possible to announce the awarding of a \$100 Lyric Prize, in Memory of Harriet Monroe, to be given next November. We hope also to repeat the usual Levinson Prize, the Guarantors Prize, and the Midland Authors Prize.

An important new prize was founded in *POETRY* in April by Mrs. Inez Cunningham Stark of Chicago. This is the Harriet Monroe Memorial Prize of \$100, which will be given for five years beginning next November in memory of the founder of *POETRY* by one of her close friends.

The death in early July of Mrs. Frank Lowden deprived *POETRY* of one of its oldest friends and supporters. We join the Chicago community in sorrow over the loss of one of its finest and most generous citizens, whose loyalty to this magazine has for many years been an inspiring encouragement to its work and purpose.

In October *POETRY* hopes to observe appropriately its Twenty-fifth Anniversary and the completion of a quarter-century of work on behalf of the welfare of literature in America.

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ERRATA.

- Page 113, line 4 For *begin* read *begins*.
- Page 118, line 8 For *1916* read *1915*
- Page 187, line 21 For *Lights enter* read *Light enters*
- Page 220, line 17 Remove comma at end of line.
- Page 221, line 18 For *involved* read *invoked*.
- Page 272, line 13 For *Il* read *La.*

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A wise eclecticism renders *POETRY* the only true "Magazine of Verse," . . . an inestimable repertory for the understanding of recent Anglo-Saxon poetry.

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No. I

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Poetry

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VOL. L
No. I

APRIL 1937

HERE IS THE STREET

CROOKED ROAD, CROOKED YEAR

ONLY THE SAND against the windows, only
The smoke rushing through the night,
And your face gone out in the plush light,
And the streets, the street lamps guttering.
Here the pine that held the blue sky
And the willows carved with initials, heart and hair,
They drift to transient harbors, drift
Waxing and waning where farm wives shift —
On porches strewn with morning glories —
Their gingham dresses while the new moon lifts;
They shift and turn and shuffle up the stair.

As deaf mutes — all passion at their finger tips,
Their fingers an abstraction of the blood —

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Your eyes, precision instruments, passed
Out of the train into the country
Of picture postcard skies where a man was walking
Into the trees and two boys fishing for minnows.
Upon the tracks amid the flying country
Only a woman running, only the street
That solves the stars, only the muffled beat
Of drums, of water falling;
The evening running and — O drums rolling
Orion, Orion, Orion!

In the distance the rails bisect a town,
First the frame houses — then a factory.
A man was shivering. Here is the street. See,
The harbor dips to his knees and the sky of dawn
Is swinging as a fog is swinging bells.
The oak leaf flies. We are drifting. Here
Is bat hair, owl glare, shells and Jack o'Lantern's fear.

Where a tear is the only light the train
Drives forward, lanterns swinging; where
Perhaps a singing school the night, perhaps
Rainbows from oil pools in newsboys' early eyes;
Perhaps breath colored was the wind, perhaps
The trembling star of our spoilt holidays
Calling the hands to supper, cow bell tinkling
In what far valleys green? From a lagoon
A phonograph is playing; canoers throng
Out of division — meet the hands, touch hands!

David Schubert

The lips an aerial lust. And the road, tortured in strife,
Heals. They love each other and the ghost —
The singer lives in the song, come back to life.

A public park is traveling past the train,
Past spring and jonquils the straw hats are borne —
They are walking over spring, pathetic and forlorn.
The street sign says *Dead End*. Here
No progress for the admiral where nurses,
Nurses and sparrows chitter in his ear.
The Admiral of the Park calls to his friends
Strange and remote, remote; yawns once,
And pulls his granite coat about his neck.

And somewhere is a player piano throbbing
Or with a child's mechanics thumps a dance,
Pedals *My Rosary*, or *Hearts and Flowers*,
O Promise Me to ditch men and mill hands.
In parlors of cloth roses and hair divans
The air is sweet and heavy with the romance
Of Indian maidens — Sunday in starched wood lands.
And here an alley cat is screaming, sobs
Past alleys and back fences;
And now an organ grinder brings out of the ashes
Roses and pretenses.

The train is racing past, the lonely miles
Are shunted at grade crossings. Still and black,
O still and lustre-lack and stiller, stiller —
The tail light now and now the night collapse.

POETRY: A Magazine of Verse

THE LAKE

Star above, star below,
Smoke creeping on the fields —
The locomotive creeping.
O my star, my star below,
Take me so.

Poplar, green poplar, and shadow
Of headlights, autolights, on the pines.
Dry-rot forgot, maggot slug,
Bought and sold and lost and found;
Pine cone, pine needle on the ground,
On the pine a star, a moon;
On the pine today, yesterday,
Tomorrow, the mourning dove's tune.
Landscape of a dream and landscape tall
Of yours and my fairy tale.

Star above, star below,
I never loved you ever, never.
"What in the world shall we do," you said.
"You're always six years behind. Wish I were dead."

Star above, star below,
Too far to walk home. "Lord,
It's too far to find the word
In the train, in the rain, and through the glass
We saw through tears their gestures pass —
The kiss, the father, the errant child."

David Schubert

Star above, star below,
My lover, O my lover, O
The way is hard and wild and wild,
And the heart — it cries like a lost child.

WHEN APPLES ON THE LILAC

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BRING THE CHILDREN IN THE AFTERNOON!
BRING YOURSELF IN THE EVENING!
DANCE WITH FRIENDS IN THE EVENING!
WITH THE TRUNKLESS MAN IN THE MOON!
SEDUCTIVE TUNES! IRRESISTIBLE ORCHESTRA! SAIL
FOR THE BALI ISLES IN A DINNER PAIL!
ADULTS 50 CENTS, 25 CENTS CHILDREN!
FREE DIRECTIONS FOR THE LONESOME PINE TRAIL!

The factory whistle blew and I remembered
The tent pitched in the vacant lot where I
Crept Saturdays to watch the Baptist Revival
And saw the Preacher knock the Devil out
While the tent leaped in the moon like a silver trout.
Outside the hoky poky man chipped ice

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And while the voices droned like flies
With bottles full of hair tonic he placed
The color all around. I hugged my slice
Of water and I saw where Gabriel (dressed
In corduroy) laced Mrs. Johnson's shoes.

The organ-grinder with the parrot used to come
Out of a child's ear. We heard him blocks away.
Before the box began we knew the play.
His organ box had a sign, "Hearts mended here!"
Two hearts were intertwined in crayon. The parrot
Picked the pennies from our fingers and like
A tragedian gravely dropped them in a cup.
They tinkled a moment — were still —
And all the music was gathered for the till
Except the scattered chords we used to whistle.

O Mr. Medium Man — Italian — hurdy gurdy man —
Your little box spilt heaven and the parrot
Told fortunes on small name cards.
We all grew up to be President in the White House,
Preferably though, in a Log Cabin or —
Best of all — an aviator
On a fire net. Where is the nickel garret
We entered and could stroke Polly parrot?
A Ford sedan explored original skies —
The paper airplane sinks, freighted with lies —
The long ears of a child a jackass' ears —
Why does your face, Van, change to another's?

David Schubert

And Jesus leaning on a hydrant in the noon
On the lame street where the men stood
Into the moon, into back office doors —
Upon the air he watched their faces die,
Or sprawling on the windows like glass flies.
And pity like an adolescent cries —
Crossing the street — self-conscious awkward tears
For love! . . . Love that moved the stars
Begs at the corner and a hag's face wears.

David Schubert

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SONGS

By Federico Garcia Lorca

RIDER'S SONG

Cordova, far and lonely.

Black pony, full moon,
And olives in my pocket:
Although I know the roads,
I'll never reach Cordova.

For the plain, for the wind,
Black pony, red moon,
And death is watching for me
Beside Cordova's towers.

Alas! the long, long highway,
Alas! my valiant pony,
Alas, that death is waiting
Before I reach Cordova.

Cordova, far and lonely.

LITTLE BALLAD OF THREE RIVERS

The Guadalquivir river
Flows between orange and olive.
Two rivers of Granada
Come down from snow to wheat field.

Ah, Love, the unreturning!

Federico Garcia Lorca

The Guadalquivir river
Has banks of ruddy garnet.
Two rivers of Granada —
One weeps, and one is bloody.

Ah, Love, lost in the air!

Seville has a highway
For stately sailing-vessels.
But for Granada water
Only the sighs go rowing.

Ah, Love, the unreturning!

Guadalquivir, high tower,
Wind among orange-blossoms.
Genil and Darro, lowly
And dead among the marshes.

Ah, Love, lost in the air!

Who says the water breeds
Will-o-the-wisps at twilight?

Ah, Love, the unreturning!

Bear olive and orange-blossom
Seaward, O Andalusia!

Ah, Love, lost in the air!

Translated by Rolfe Humphries

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SIX POEMS

MIND ON PAPER

Hardly can you spare the swift spirit's purgatory
Nor hardly share in his grief
For he who has set himself to survey
The frozen limits of thought
Must ponder through his love alone.

Reflect on the forces he shall encounter
Who tests the power of words:
Though emerging clear as a telescope lens
No measure of sensitized speech can hold
For long an unmelted sparkle against the sun.

SEA-STORM

Lowering thunder spreads the rushes askew
Edging the beach, while water slurs
Into wave patterns of coarse lace
And cloud-foam falls over hill, blurs

The distant distinct land-surface
Of shining green. Watch lightning
Approach starkly stiff-jagged
After seconds banging, heightening

Earth's dark, deserted of sun:
A cry of light: the cracking of a gun.

Emma Swan

WINTER SEASON

Frozen: and if ever the clouds
Remove their heavy odor of snow,
Surely there will be sun.

Trees reflect winter trim
In their bare twigs: corn-fields
Stiffen with prickles of rooted stalks
And fresh wind smooths the brown grass:

Earth with delicate fingers laces
Last year's leaves with these,
All dry and easily torn:
Deaf to any change in tone of cold.

Frozen lakes in the valleys: Stiffened
Fields and hills: Forget the other
Brave fashions of seasons for this,
New-wrought, of parched and blast-baked air.

WALKING

A dry silence where the leaves were
And through the woods hardly a crackle
Without wind: there was none, only
A hoppity bird would sometimes stir a branch:

Briars caught their clothes, but at least
They knew where to find the road

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When they wanted to return. They slept
In a clearing of leaf-laid ground

Until snow took them away and the road
Stretched, dusty in the winter night.

THE DICTATES OF RIGHT REASON

With what small words we seal ourselves
“Yes,” hurriedly and a year is gone
No one is left to tell what delves
Down in the ground and lives alone.

“No,” and we are sent to a prison-camp in droves
And all day chop at stone from rock.
Look now at her immaculate gloves
How kid molding her hand closes the padlock

On a door she will not know, and once
A monk bound a belt around
His gown to stay until the last ounce
Of life was spent: words propound

An identical strangle-hold which may sever
In us the tears and years of earth’s care
With molding and making of the spare
Build of bold words on words forever.

Emma Swan

THE SEARCH-LIGHT

May the Saints and Angels,
The Virgin and Virtuous have a care
For you in heaven, for I shan't be there.
And may the earth-born from chancels

Tell out your daring in distant realms,
I shall not turn the voices of your fame,
With facility their echo overwhelms
Any counter rumor. Your name

Is as high-powered as the sun, throwing beams
Across the cloud-rests of a hill:
I will not intercept these golden gleams
But ponder from a distance, still

Swinging clear of this perfected radiance
That would burn ardor to a cinder at a glance.

Emma Swan

SIX MEN AND THEIR DOG

The morning bright with cold and early frost
wrapping about the heart, cutting the eyes
clear from the heaviness of bed-clothes ;
the consciousness of the fragile pale delicacy
of tinsel dew staying the eyes, and of the
humble company of trees at edge of road
watching us pass ;
few words reward their patient listening :
comment on rabbit night-murdered in a ditch
or on the quality of early corn.

The dog runs on, alone, but ever turning
as though to lead us on to such adventure
as only his wild heart could dream ;
impatient of reluctant steps that follow,
he leaves the road, chasing ambitious after
the shadowed wings of lark blessing the ground.
Poet among his dull companions, he only leaves
our rank that uninspired trudges to toil
with never glance to hills or heights of trees.

And still orchestraed by the rising birds
we pass by fields, naming them in our hearts
with names of men that own them, no Field of Gold,
or Runnymede, or Potter's Ground, but only
neighbor's property with neighbor's name.
Fresh virgin corn untouched of hand, fresh green

Donagh MacDonagh

as the first corn that ever daring mind
conceived as food ; cows waiting on the touch
of well known fingers, horses unthoughtful of
the day to come. These we pass by, while I reflect
that by these changeless symbols we are one
with all days that have passed in Thrace or Rome,
or any place the name of which comes ready
to the tongue. We six have walked before
a similar road, preparing still to reap
what we have planted, with prayer upon our lips
to Ceres or Osiris, or any god.

Our dog, ambassador from us to all the earth,
leaps far ahead following his frantic dream
with volatile and unselfconscious feet.

Donagh MacDonagh

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LAMENT

It is the first bleak moment of the spring
Before any bud, leaf or blade is stirring.

The garden lies toward the river, desolate, bare,
Dim, mute — no song, no color wakens there.

Down upon it with hard hostile eye
The sun looks coldly.

Over the harsh water a gull is blown,
White, crescent-curved in the wind — turns and is gone

Beyond the sodden flower-beds, the snarled boughs,
The broken urns, the old ugly empty house;

Gone like some other thing that tossed once in the wind,
Some wild sea-bird of the heart or of the mind;

Gone where I too would go who to this ground
Clings like an old snarled leafless tree, root-bound.

Clara Shanafelt

NOTES OF A NATURALIST

THE INNER ZONE

Man is his atmosphere for rare or dense.
He 's ape that leans upon a solar freak,
Who to the cloud of his circumference
Brings no fair weather to himself unique.

It is the Moon that hopes an Earth benign,
That tilts a mirror for her foreign gleam,
Think you the Sun would live by other shine?
He is his own transcendently sure beam.

Let moods be satellites to wait on tints
Glowing or bleak as they face in or out
On our flame selves or the dim elements,
But we initiate and girt about,
Hold good the fastness of the inner zone
Wherein the fire lives, if it would live, alone.

LOST TRAILS

The bud remembers the seed
With just so much belief
As the leaf remembers the bud
And the tree the leaf.

And the flower incredulous
And the fruit amazed

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Look dumb on the April mists
Through which they hazed.

No rock but forgot the dust,
No rain but forgot the dew,
Not a man that can tell the shape
Of the life he drew.

And woman so lost in love,
So sundered from all before,
Does an alien walk an alien land
Or a native a native shore?

DRY SPELL

The season of drought
Had made me forget
The brook in my mind
And its cascadinet.

But the brook in the fields
Has made me recall
The brook in my mind
And its arrowy fall.

NIGHT CHANGE

The stars setting in your face
In the wane of night

Reitza Dine Wirtschafter

The slow sleep rises
Like a cloud to height.

Sets in the West of the Soul
The Midnight Mind
Whose Morning hints
A glow not yet defined.

Reitza Dine Wirtschafter

EPISTEMOLOGY

At midnight I said to the eyes in the mirror,
Stare in weariness, for you know nothing.
Neither what you lack or hope or have.
Nor what any other he or she is.
Not what any said words meant to mean,
Poetry, Christ's or mine. Nor any action.

Stare into your own eyes, dilated
With seeing, brain bulged with thinking,
In your own eyes only can you read
With certainty. Read there uncertainty,
Your ignorance. Or with sleep go salve
Those eyes, seared raw with question-marks.
Under the covers put hand over heart, breast.
Touch and listen. Afterwards, forgetting these.

Sherman Conrad

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TWO POEMS

ALEMBIC

Light, let fall from the improvident sun,
Is given back in color, born of light,
In the gold of hawkweed and dandelion,
In purple aconite.

Earth cannot rest, she turns from sun to shadow
Weaving her magical stains until the debt
Is paid full measure; summer greens the meadow,
The sea drifts to violet.

And the song that is you, the wild heart singing
Charged with laughter or grief, is but a spark
Transmuted from light falling, to light winging,
Turned home through the dark.

THE SHADOW

Nor wind nor frost nor the swift cleansing rain
May bend the shadow from its wanton will.
The sun draws down, the white moon mounts the hill,
It lengthens, darkens to a deeper stain.
Night is no remedy; it haunts the lane,
Glides through the garden, creeps along the sill.
The friendly candle wanes, leaps, flickers — still
It moves grotesquely on the counterpane.

Leila Jones

This bodiless and ghostly-shouldered self
Mimics each trembling grief, each merriment ;
Even the grave becomes its wormy shelf.
It follows far as east and west are wide,
Yet no man walks the earth would be content
Lacking this darker double at his side.

Leila Jones

SONG OF AH HING

In an Alaskan Fishery

The great unwieldy gray days
Lumber slowly away,
Rocked by the cold sobbing breathing,
And scalded by the bitter unceasing tears
Of the patient blind oxen who draw a hidden sun ;
While far in the southland, east of the Sandalwood moun-
tains,
Fragrant oranges ripen,
Warm quivering globes of sweet spices ;
And the breasts of Moy Ling,
Like pale golden pears,
Are a-tremble to melt in my hands.

Hallock Marsh

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NEW YORK

In hazy evening, hyacinthine blue,
The boat comes slowly, gradually in.
Into a golden track behind our backs
The Atlantic gathers the long lonely days
Of solitary suspended travelling.

Food for thought in the sea;
Matter for musing in the steep flanks of the ship.
We have remembered grand adventurers,
Raleigh, the Cabots, and Sir Humphrey Gilbert
Reading his English Bible in *The Squirrel*,
Quietly reading as his boat went down.

Last land we saw
Was England;
White cliffs, little yachts
Circling, hovering like moths;
Enclosed green fields
And small red houses stuck like postage stamps
Into the circumspect, decorous hillside.

What is before?
What that we have longed for?
Escape, freedom to preserve the dream?
Freedom to build and strength to plant anew?
What was it hailed, welcomed the early pilgrims,
What of integrity and spirit's peace?

Katharine Garvin

Through the evening,
Hushed and like a dream of hyacinths,
Shines the lofty city of New York.
Tall, mysteriously silent towers
Gaze magnificently across the ocean,
Meeting and matching the traveller's inward leaping;
Endless misty towers wreathed in cloud,
Lit with moonstones, twinkling, beckoning,
The quiet beacons of the delivering land.

Katharine Garvin

WITHIN BE FED

Protect the darkness that,
Indigenous to the soul,
In olden hours begat
Religion; art; the whole
Of permanence: the other
That threw in light is lost.
O ancient, elder mother,
Soul's darkness, we are tossed
Naked into the sun
With the ephemerae.
Defeat oblivion
For us, that else must die.

Kenneth Slade Alling

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INTERIOR

I

This room by a late winter moon composed,
Curtained and carpeted in austere white,
This long familiar room has now disclosed
Something beyond the scrutiny of light.
At every window, arched by leafless trees,
The resplendent night looks in — no spider thread
Is spinning in this room of silences...
There is no sound when everything is said...

There is no sound — but something I remember
That someone said a century ago
Has shifted in my heart like a flaring ember.
A voice that I have loved and do not know
Is speaking in this snowy room... almost
The immaculate stillness yields what I have lost.

II

The sleet taps silver hammers at the pane,
Building white cities, tenantless and splendid,
Under a winter sky — and once again
The mind returns upon itself, befriended
Only by fire, a spark against the frost,
Contriving a niche for golden summer, spinning
Its fragile house against an enormous host
That gazes at its end from its beginning.

Florence Ripley Mastin

Yet, briefly fortified, this puny mind
Climbs through the polar darkness to the sun,
Passing strange continents of stars, confined
No more by substance than the winds that run
Like waterfalls down the steep sky — no more
Than the drifting snow beyond its narrow door.

III

This room is now distilled like a winter rose
With cobwebbed frost on the windows, and the flush
Of fire-light on the shadowed walls . . . who knows
What dreams gather like bees, what visions hush
Their wings against this beauty now? I taste
An aromatic happiness, a peace,
Touching a petalled moment without haste,
Dwelling in contemplation out of lease.

O music, delicate as bells of snow,
O exquisite laughter, softer than a cloud,
You are the architecture of this slow
Serenity in the mind's fantastic crowd;
New ramparts of defense you have designed
Against the gathering tumult of the mind.

Florence Ripley Mastin

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THE HUNTED VOICE

SNOW AND HOLY GHOST

The snow has been restrained a year
But still remembers how to fall:
Enough space hangs between each flake
To keep the lace from being wall;

Enough lace is suspended now
And passes downward with a sound
Until it need not move too far
To meet the slowly rising ground.

The snow steps on the bittersweet
And shall not help the berry rise
When flake climbs flake, and all the land
Grows white up to my frightened eyes.

Two great things that possess the world —
The snow, and the embracing Dove —
Have shut too well away from me
The berry, and the little love.

DESIRERS

Desire to leave the body in a room,
Or somewhere in the ground, the final heir,
To rid the spirit of its pose of wind
And reach the calm reality at last,

Elda Tanasso

Is never granted to the living man,
But to the dead who is beyond desire.

I know a moment comes to me as clear
As the first star on a waiting winter night;
The body fails, and all the reaching out,
The torment in the airless heart, the grief,
The blindness, and the long misunderstanding,
Fail with the body too; and God is here,
The ultimate, the absolute, the life.

Why does the moment pass? I cannot live
Knowing the imperfection of my living.
Why does the moment come to me and pass?
My life is not so strong that it can watch
Perfection lasting less than the evening star,
Then turn to lesser sights; nor hated so
That I would wish for death, though death is still
The only life where I can be appeased.

STORM AT DAWN

Wildness returns to earth now with the storm
Burst over dawn, the time set for the east
To open in austerity and silence.
Earth is turned human now, the silence ceased,
And wind curves poplars from their sunrise form.

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Who, waking at this hour, will ever hear
Other than sorrow loosened on the air?
A terror in his mind, his heart too lonely
To want the solace given those who bear
Grief with a charitable hope, he makes his fear
The lost beginning and the end of all.
Mountains of wind against the blinded rain
Create the sounds he hears now, out of waking;
All human voices trying to explain,
Without the shield of words, their temporal
Idolatry, and wanting, from the dark
Of weakness and confusion, a reply.
Where is the mercy that is always wordless?
Pitted against the low cave of the sky
There is no mercy. If there were a mark,
A crevice lit with morning in the east,
Who would be listening, though there were no words?
Would someone who had waited for the silence
Now hear, above the tangle of the birds,
A pitying simplicity?

The beast

That cowered in the field senses the worth
Of peaceful air, though it knows less than man,
Who takes no comfort from the wildness' being
The storm between two silences, the span,
The human interlude upon the earth.

Elda Tanasso

SEA AT NIGHT

The bells of light are quiet now and gone;
The water draws a low sound from its darkness.
Nothing that looks down can print a shadow
On water that is covered with its own.

A silence is not peace when absent voice
Would struggle hopelessly to gain its presence;
Even a silence like a darkened cavern
Claiming the throat, the blind and strange mind's choice,
Shall know that peace must have a bell-like sound,
That I am more than water; I am sorrow
Lost from the light, and I am desolation
Searching for voice until it shall be found.

Elda Tanasso

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VOLUME FIFTY

WITH this April issue the fiftieth volume of POETRY opens. When it closes next September a quarter-century of publication will be completed and a twenty-fifth birthday achieved.

To arrive at that age may mean little enough for most divine and human institutions, but for a magazine of poetry means much: an endurance unrivalled in the record literature, a supreme tenacity in aims, a resistance to chance, and discouragement almost bordering on the phenomenal. It means that of all the literary projects born of the hopes of 1912, POETRY is the only survivor; that here alone as much alone as in October 1912 — American poetry has a forum, its place of exhibition to a public that seems willing to forget the heroic labors of its pioneers and to revert to apathy whose dead weight on the literary scene twenty years ago provided the chief incentive to POETRY's foundation.

Whoever remembers the plight of American poetry in 1912 needs no reminder of how much heroism was required to lift it from neglect and pompous oblivion to new and recognition — how much enthusiasm had to be aroused, how much courage summoned, how much confidence ratiocinated in order to give the new poets within two or three years a jubilant hearing among the people. The writing and reading of modern verse have become intelligent today beyond the beliefs of anyone who was a student or apprentice twelve or fifteen years ago. But if the conditions of literary publica-

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n 1937 are any index, the public today still needs fresh and forcible reminders of its duty to poets. Their value may be more generally respected and their work more broadly recognized, but their means of winning a hearing are again almost as slender as they were when *POETRY*'s quarter-century began. Many magazines and manifestoes have come and gone; movements have multiplied and subsided; but at the end of these struggles the American poet again finds himself almost wholly bereft of his weapons and defenses.

Today there is not a single major magazine in New York or its sister-cities that publishes poetry — except in that role of ancient indignity, the "filler," which is grudgingly allowed its page or column-end once or twice a month. There is no periodical dedicated freely and without partisan prejudice to poetic experiment. There is none to which a poet — whatever his youth or his dignity — would go with his manuscript and expect to find not merely an intelligent hearing but the space necessary to print a poem of serious length. The weeklies and monthlies that once opened their pages to modern verse have closed them again. The experimental reviews and quarterlies, the little magazines and fugitive leaflets, have (except for one or two uncertain survivors) dwindled and vanished. The idea even becomes fashionable that perhaps the whole revival of poetry was an exaggerated delusion, a heated literary jingoism that accompanied the pre-War and post-War fevers and in its own good time died down of exhaustion, allowing the saner affairs of life to resume their importance in the public mind. Even where

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judgment is not as callous as this, it is argued that a cycle of poetic vitality has run its course, an impasse of spiritual blankness has arrived, and a proper recess for poets should be declared. The harsh realities defined by the "depression poets" in England and America five years ago are merely the last of the disagreeable facts which are now to be interred and hushed up.

It is in itself a phenomenon that dismissals of this kind are a matter of routine deference when handed to poets, but become scandalous atrocities as soon as they are dealt out to the other arts. It never occurs to patrons and purchasers to call a halt to the production of music, operas, pictures, statues, monuments, and archaeological expeditions, to the schools or colleges in which they are bred, the laboratories and studios in which they are practised, and the galleries and concert-halls in which they get a hearing. It would even be a shocking absurdity to pass out walking-papers to dramatists, novelists, journalists, historians, and librarians. The poet still exists on sufferance, is given a three-year contract with no promise of renewal, or is hired by the day for the husking-season only. Of course there is one obvious reason for his precarious footing — he practises the supreme art from whose highest standard any deviation may mean irredeemable incompetence. He is not usually allowed to flounder around in all degrees of passable mediocrity on the chance that he may provide good entertainment. But it is easily forgotten that if a poet is to give his best, there must be a medium for the giving, a means of gaining the public

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ear, and a faint certainty that what he says will be heard. The most absolute ascetics among poets never wrote without some hope of that.

The role of POETRY in this situation is again very much what it was in the autumn of 1912. The magazine has returned squarely to its original responsibilities. Its founder needed every ounce of conviction and persistence to launch her work at the beginning. There was no existing model, scheme, or encouragement to help her. In the wake of that first October issue there suddenly arose the greatest public enthusiasm for poetry that the United States had ever seen — a nation-wide clamor, new successes every month, multitudes of groups, movements, and magazines, and ranks of honor for the canonized among the bards.

But all is changed, that high horse riderless,
Though mounted in that saddle Homer rode. . .

So, at least, it now appears; and public complacence is inclined to take critical pessimism and the bleak views of certain recent poets at their own word, and to sink back into a comfortable indifference to duty. To what POETRY has achieved in its foregoing forty-nine volumes, this fiftieth must add a fresh emphasis and an eloquent plea to all its friends and supporters to keep the magazine as firmly and passionately the last defender of contemporary poets as in its opening issues it was the first; to keep one national institution alive in the service of the greatest of the literary arts; and to keep the immediate future free of the blight of the most abject of all povertyes.

M. D. Z.

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RILKE IN HIS AGE

Rainer Maria Rilke, the Austrian poet who died in Switzerland in 1926 at the age of fifty-one, is a rare modern example of the poet who, "having learned to give himself to what he trusted," finally "learned to give himself to what he feared"; an artist who neither became stunted through, nor desired to escape from, the demands of his nature and his art; a poet whose work grew with him. In a period when the facing of inner truth is in no way a popular occupation — since too many flights away from the task, from war to suicide, are not only accessible but even morally respectable — a dedicated career like Rilke's becomes an heroic career. His talent for detachment, his distrust of the state of being loved ("Etre aimer, c'est vivre mal et en péril"), have laid him open to the charge of neurotic irresponsibility. We have only his work to assure us of the ultimate hollowness of this charge, and that work is strongly reassuring. Rilke was often exhausted, often afraid, often in flight, but he was capable of growth and solitude, a process and a state denied to the coward's or the delinquent's existence. And he stands as an example of integrity held through and beyond change — one of the few examples of such integrity that our times have produced.

The steady growth of interest in Rilke has brought on several attempts to make him available to English-speaking readers. Four of his prose works have appeared in English translation: *The Journal of My Other Self* (originally *Die*

Rilke in His Age

Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge), *The Life and Death of Cornet Christopher Rilke*, *Stories of God*, and *Letters to a Young Poet*. His last and greatest group of poems, the *Duineser Elegien*, have been translated by E. and V. Sackville-West in a finely printed and limited edition published by the Hogarth Press in 1931. As early as 1918 Miss Jessie Lemont translated some of the earlier poems with more awe than skill, and Ludwig Lewisohn and Jethro Bithell have done other renderings. Lately Stephen Spender has tried his hand at the difficult task.

It is always a question what use translation of any poetry serves. And the greater the poetry, the more closely it is limited to existence behind the barrier of the language in which it was originally written. When the work is subtle in meaning, intensely accurate in perception, profound in feeling, and the product as well of great technical virtuosity, the translator may well hesitate before attempting his task. Rilke may be classed with Baudelaire and Valéry as a poet complete appreciation of whom demands some knowledge in the reader of German and French.

J. B. Leishman, whose devotion to Rilke's work is undeniably deep and sincere, began to produce, in 1931, his series of translations with a volume of selections from all periods of Rilke's career, entitled *Poems*. Whatever his native qualifications for the task (and to lift Rilke into English requires extraordinary qualifications), and whatever his failure and successes, there is no doubt that the earlier book, together with the two volumes now under discussion, with their

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meticulous notes and long biographical and critical prefaces, give for the first time to the English reader a comprehensive notion of the quality, the range, and the power in one of the great poets of our time.¹

Requiem and Other Poems contains, among other things, versions of seventeen poems from the two volumes of *Neue Gedichte* first published in 1907 and 1908 — the books wherein the great and mature Rilke for the first time came into view. The period which produced this poetry began after Rilke's meeting with Rodin. Rilke's early work had been filled with the mysticism, even the sentimentality, and with that "unwillingness to renounce the attractions of the obscurer depths of the soul," which are peculiarly German. As he later expressed it, until he met Rodin nature had remained for him "a general occasion." His religious feeling, his seeking for God, had been at its worst a kind of adolescent *Schwärmerei* which his visits to Russia had fostered. The poems written immediately before his first visit to Paris (in spite of their great sincerity of tone and their growing mastery over effects) contain poems dangerously near religiosity of feeling.

¹ *Requiem and Other Poems*, translated from the German with an Introduction by J. B. Leishman. London: Hogarth Press. 1935. *Sonnets to Orpheus*. The German text, with an English translation, Introduction, and notes, by J. B. Leishman. The same. 1936. The Hogarth Press also published the *Poems* in 1931, and the Sackville-West translation of the *Duineser Elegien* in the same year. The four prose translations named above, made chiefly by M. D. Herter Norton, have been published in America by W. W. Norton & Co., in 1930, 1932, 1933, and 1934.

Rilke in His Age

He was born in Prague in 1875. His father's family was of German peasant stock which claimed some distant aristocratic admixture. His mother was Jewish. From a rather pampered and enervating childhood he passed, at the age of eleven, to the hard life of a military school, which he endured for five years, an experience he never fully recovered from, and to which his distrust of close human relationships may perhaps be traced. He began to write — and publish — very young, and in 1899 and 1900, after an abortive attempt at training in the law and an unfortunate and silly early love-affair, he made two visits to Russia with his cousin, Lou Andréas-Salome. He met Tolstoy and felt some vague sympathy with the tenets of Tolstoism. In 1901 he married a young sculptress and through her became interested in Rodin. He first went to Paris in 1902, and on his second visit lived with Rodin as secretary for a year (1905 to 1906).²

Malte Laurids Brigge and the *Neue Gedichte* are the direct products of the influence upon Rilke of Paris and of Rodin. Rodin taught him that the moment of inspiration must not be waited for but must be summoned and seized; and from Paris he learned that

aversion from any kind of existence is as little permitted the creator as selection: a single withdrawal at any time thrusts him from the state of grace, makes him wholly and entirely sinful. . . . Behind this devotion, in a small way at first, begins holiness: the

² For much information concerning, and analysis of Rilke's work, I am indebted to *La Poésie autrichienne de Hofmannsthal à Rilke*, by Geneviève Bianquis (Paris: Les Presses Universitaires de France. 1926).

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simple life of a love that has endured, that without ever praising itself on that account, advances to everything, unaccompanied, inconspicuous, worthless. Proper work, abundance of tasks, all begin for the first time beyond this endurance.

Malte Laurids Brigge takes up, with extraordinary courage, the spiritual dissection of a modern city where it had been dropped by Baudelaire. (It was with Baudelaire that Rilke comforted himself during his first terrible Paris days.) In the Paris streets Rilke laid himself open to the strongest impacts of fear, horror, and loneliness. The cripples, the beggars, the madmen, the paupers, the terrible sick in those streets, became for him the doorways to meaning, to the secret which must, he believed, be hidden from mankind. He instinctively used "that mental pathology which seeks to understand human personality by studying it in its rare or morbid states, states in formation or deliquescence." And he not only looked upon suffering people in search of the secret. He went to "things"—animals, sculpture, flowers, cathedrals, paintings, an open square or a countryside. He detached himself from a subjective approach; for the first time he became objective. "His former tone . . . had been that of prayer, of the examination of conscience, of the act of faith. It had been an interior monologue which looked for God." He now looked upon "the thing" with intensity and patience. And his insight broadens even beyond the intensity which had earlier produced that profound and moving poem, *Der Schauende* (Mr. Leishman's translation of which, in the *Poems* of 1931, is up to now his most inspired version of anything in Rilke). He was granted access to that "inscape"

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which Hopkins and the great mystics have felt to be present in all objects in nature.

The *Neue Gedichte*—short, closely written, compressed into most exigent form, using the most subtle possible powers of language, rhythm, rhyme, and assonance—are of course ultimately untranslatable. The grace in them, the light which seems to fall from the depth and height of the universe upon them, their tenderness and precision, can exist only in the original German. Mr. Leishman's methods of approximation have their moments of success and failure. His extreme respect for Rilke's work has led him to use the simplest and most direct English, singularly free from rhetorical padding. But his keeping to the side of simplicity often makes the language too light and too ordinary: he is hardly ever successful in rendering Rilke's extraordinary nouns and verbs, the structure of the refracting crystal of his style. The poems are always given, however, in their original scheme of rhyme and rhythm, and the complications of the German (that language “si malléable, si capable d'abstraire et de personnifier à la fois”) are handled with a good deal of authority. One poem, *Lied vom Meer*, whose subtlety should warn off any translator from an attempt upon it—a poem which rises and subsides like a wordless cry—Mr. Leishman has attempted with unfortunate results. And in the translations of the two tender and profound poems that make up *Requiem* he again fails, because the looseness of the form demands a language more weighted, more resonant, than the English without effects into which it has been lifted.

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The *Sonnete an Orpheus* (eighteen of which in Mr. Leishman's earlier versions are included in the *Requiem* volume, and all of which, with the original German printed opposite the English versions, are included in the *Sonnets to Orpheus*) are part of the last work which Rilke accomplished. These poems, written in 1922 after ten years' silence, were "given" to Rilke when he was at last able to take up the task of completing his *Duineser Elegien*, begun in 1912 and interrupted by the War. "After months of solitary contemplation, utterance and release came to him in February, 1922, when, in a tempest of creative activity with which there is no parallel, except perhaps in the lives of some of the great musicians, the remaining eight elegies, the fifty-five *Sonnets to Orpheus*, and a number of poems he classified as *Fragmentarisches*, were written within three weeks."

These sonnets have been called, and are without doubt, the profoundest poems of our time. In them Rilke expressed more deeply and, in spite of their difficult and compressed form, more fully and clearly than in any other work his hard-won knowledge concerning love, existence, and death. Orpheus is taken as the symbol of the Mediator: the god with the lyre to whom both worlds are open, who not only knows the secret but works and expresses the secret in his song. Here Rilke made, instinctively and in his own medium, discoveries concerning the nature and workings of the unconscious startling in their accuracy. For in his later maturity he was able to bring over into the modern world — when the "great traditional therapies" had broken down

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as guides to man's thought or answers to his suffering — the love which we can only call Christian, because of its profound pity and humility. Like Yeats, Rilke had spent his life creating a religion for himself. But beyond Yeats, who came to believe in man's pride and intellect as guides and symbols, Rilke, stubbornly confronting the real world with his sensibilities, continually testing one by the other, came at last to explain the one by the other, and made a connection between them. Unlike many converts to Roman or Anglo-Catholicism in our day, he did not walk into a ready-made spiritual system and close its door behind him. In the self-imposed isolation of his later years he rediscovered the worth of traditional and mythical residues, and drew from them insights of clinical worth and exactness. He belongs to the company of those who, in our day, have uncovered forgotten truths concerning the human psyche and its relation to its world. His poetry is great because of its spiritual validity, as well as for the validity of its complicated and subtle art.

His belief that "one must praise, in spite of all"; that one must renounce, let go, die and be reborn, endure; "that egoism and childish revolt must be silenced"; that the things which rouse the most terrible grief in us (such as the death of the young) must hold for us the deepest meaning; that it is our force which must use the mechanisms of a changing world for its own ends, not the mechanisms which must weaken our force; that we exist (as the rose, "that inexhaustible thing," exists), the fruit of powers beyond us, within us, which we must in some manner trust: such belief,

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such openness, such adulthood give back to us the healing of which cynicism, hatred, and the insistence on the complete sufficiency of material systems deprive us.

Sei — und wisse zugleich des Nicht-Seins Bedingung,
den unendlichen Grund deiner innigen Schwungung,
dass du sie völlig vollziehest dieses einzige Mal.

Zu dem gebrauchten sowohl, wie zum dumpfen und stummen
Vorrat der vollen Natur, den unsaglichen Summen,
zahle dich jubelnd hinzu und vernichte die Zahl.

Although a cult of Rilke would be unfortunate (as modernly all cults tend to become), it is important that his work be made more accessible to students of modern poetry and modern thought. For his work is one of the strongest antidotes to the powers of darkness — hatred, split allegiance, guilt, and regression — that our time has produced. And although the daring yet accurate imagery, the compressed thought, and the compressed texture of this difficult poetry must come to us in a muffled and watered form, whatever hand attempts its Englishing, we must be grateful for some means of approach to its music and its meaning. With this Mr. Leishman's translations have provided us. Rilke himself believed that translations were of some value; he translated certain works of Gide, Valéry, Mallarmé, Baudelaire, Louise Labbé, and Michael Angelo.

Valéry wrote after Rilke's death:

To have lost him means to have lost one who combined in himself not only the comprehension of all the beauty Europe has produced and a deepened recognition of the riches which spring from our complexity, but one who possessed an immediate and creative sensibility — the spirit of a coming age.

Louise Bogan

A Poet's Duty

REVIEWS

A POET'S DUTY

In Sight of Mountains, by C. A. Millspaugh. Doubleday, Doran & Company.

To convey the spirit of dedication and sense of responsibility inherent in C. A. Millspaugh's work I can do no better than to transcribe, from the jacket of this first collection of his poems, his statement on the nature of poetry:

Poetry is a living tradition. It is the past's way of functioning in the present, and the immediate moment's way of preparing for the future. It is a way of speaking with the ancients, a way of living simultaneously with them and with the crowd downtown. And it is for this reason that I think it the poet's duty to see the world's whole scene as completely and as intensely as his sensibility will permit. . . . Much of the work in *In Sight of Mountains* is personal, but it is so, I hope, in the sense that deeply felt personal emotion is universal emotion.

The virtues of a capacious sympathy, an intense sensibility, and a technical resourcefulness are conjoined in at least half a dozen admirable poems. Discounting the experimental failures and the inevitable derivativeness, both in accent and tone, that beset a first collection, one has no difficulty here in recognizing the signature of an ambitious, masculine talent, although the outlines of the work as a whole are blurred by an indecision that is characteristic of much of the serious creative effort of our time.

Mr. Millspaugh's conviction that "poetry needs an active pessimism, an attitude of mind that does not expect peace or diminution of terror," is opposed by a simultaneous yearning to be an affirmative poet, to exult in the eternal drama

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in which "earth's simple sons defy invading Death." He would prefer, if he could, to be on the side of the optimists, but the conditions of an optimism, since he is "without political interests," are as yet undefined by him. The tropism of his temper is illustrated by his curious praise of Hopkins as a "glad" poet, "Hope's Hero," as though the terrible sonnets had never been written.

The dominant symbol itself is a variable in shifting perspective. The title-piece gives us a moment of "respite under the hill" before we

... start the steep ascent,
Our eyes before us and our gestures grave,
Like Odysseus on the wandering ship, curious and brave.

In the concluding poem, however — *To One Who Cries from the Mountains* — it is the angry idealist who lives on the mountains. He is advised by the poet to stop his calling, for causes are sterile:

Therefore come down into the valleys and live among us,
who under boughs replenish the grave's hunger.
See the scars on our thighs, our backs hooked over dust,
our stalled-in-shadow houses, the brave, the donkey-humble.

Such phrases as "the frost's hard silver hand," "winds ripping deep whimpering leaves," "the lewd dominion of dream," indicate the variety and value of Mr. Millspaugh's best writing. On the other hand, he will carelessly refer to "vertical heights," as though horizontal heights were conceivable; employ irrelevant and ambiguous imagery, as in his color-description of ice — "as blue as doom on lungs that have inhaled the Nile"; and occasionally mar a poem

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with sentimental word-painting—"one aloof with wounded hands Who sits upon a star and sings." His symbols are drawn mainly from Christian mythology and—more effectively—the natural world. In *Hypothesis for Ego* he fools unhappily with scientific jargon: "In lack of an ar ranged field between opposed conductors No life would leap, universe a never-began."

My feeling is that Mr. Millspaugh's search for a distinctive architecture is not yet ended; that he needs to recognize and hold fast to his central poetic impulse; that he still faces the bitter necessity of making moral judgments. For the efficacy of the casual he can study the beautifully understated last stanza of his *Under Midnight Over Indiana*; for the dynamics of dogma, *On the Humility of the Defeated*; for structural coherence and sustained lyric value, *The Angels in the Mountains*; for economy of expression, the fifth stanza of *Lament for a Banished King*.

Stanley J. Kunitz

AMERICAN PASTORALS

The Deer Come Down, by Edward Weismiller. Yale University Press.

The two books preceding this in the Yale Series of Younger Poets were so good that the work of all but a few American poets would suffer by comparison with them. It is therefore not a damning criticism of *The Deer Come Down* to say that nothing in it can stand with James Agee's

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poems in lyric richness or with Muriel Rukeyser's work in honesty and intensity. From the standpoint of the Yale editors Mr. Weismiller's verses probably make a departure of no small value to the series. They are concerned with a setting very different from Agee's passionately tested Christian world or Rukeyser's dream-enlightened and cruel one. Their imagery is drawn from American country life, considered in terms of the earth and its animals and seasons. They lead contemplation into the outwardly simple, neglected forms of nature, for which conventional meanings often suffice; thus even such slight and sentimental complexities as they propose have a certain freshness. I have seen animal poems by Frances Frost that suggested a more valid mystery than any of Weismiller's, but his work is generally harder than hers and less liable to fake eloquence. It would be unjust to dignify these poems too much or to imply that Weismiller has rendered anything either profound or exciting. He has written agreeable verse out of the material closest to his hand, has learned something from Robert Frost, something from Emily Dickinson, and a good deal from other and less refined versifiers. Through his young poems the current of American poetry that came to mid-stream with *North of Boston* flows on respectably, if somewhat muddied by mannerisms. In the title of his third section, *Precarious Legend*, and in the four sonnets that end the book Weismiller has shown his consciousness of more powerful realities, though he has not yet perceived or judged them.

American Pastorals

With his undoubted energy and real compulsion Weismiller needs more discipline in the precisions, economies, and rhythms of language — as distinguished from the mechanics of versification, in which he has more than sufficient interest and ability. Many of his poems are overwritten, plastered with useless words, limping with defeated endings. If his sense of form had been further developed he would have known more often when to await cleaner phrasing or at least when to let well enough alone. The shorter lyrics in *The Deer Come Down* are more successful than the others because in them a certain concision is exacted by the form. Between two good ones — the first and third in the book — there is a longer item in blank verse which illustrates some of Weismiller's sins at their most damaging. For a spring rain in Vermont, "the water walks / with windy footsteps softly . . . stalking / the germ of this paralysis, ice-clothed / and spawning winter. . ." Here, after padding a decent image with the word "softly," he gets into a morass of metaphor with the ill-chosen verb "stalking." The poem becomes an extended figure. "The cold hills are walls / that cup a frozen broth" and this cup is "offered over the flame of season" in an extravagant telescoping of bacteriology, chemistry, and ritual. Then we have "a brew of laden wind," a "muddy brew of air rumpled / with sooty thunder" and further efforts, even more desperate, which bloat and discolor the poem out of all clarity. It is pleasant to proceed to the first quatrain of *Plan for a City*:

Now will the fragile spring come down

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Upon this hill, upon this town,
And sun bring hesitant leaves to bear
Its intricate shadow in the air

which delivers its image nicely with echoing dactyls, though it is followed by a more dubious touch:

Now will the birds enforce their sweet
Articulate joy above the street—

and by a fizzie:

Where lie stained fragments of a plan
The winds swung down too close to man.

In all but half a dozen of Weismiller's poems faults like these enfeeble what is often a pleasant perception or emotion. Finished and firmly written, however, are *Thicket*, *Vermont Farmer*, *Wood Road*, *Snow Field*, *Frog*, *Deer Passing*, *House*.

Robert Fitzgerald

THE WHOLE POET

Collected Poems, 1909-1935, by T. S. Eliot. Harcourt, Brace & Company.

It is always a pleasant exercise, with a poet of any scope, to run over the bulk of his work all at once, and especially if, as is the case with Mr. Eliot's present collection, there is a small quantity of new or relatively unfamiliar work to add to the old stock as a fresh ferment. A man's poems act upon each other specifically as the works of different poets act upon each other generally. From the whole body of poetry we get an idea — a fading or quickening image — of what poetry is like; not a demonstrable idea but an idea of which we are perfectly possessed however we may come to

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alter it. From the works of one poet, as we increase our ability of response, we get similarly an indestructible haunting idea of what his work is about. Shakespeare is about all his plays, sonnets, and poems. Eliot is about all his poems and plays. There is a fundamental limited, or stretched, habit of response, of objective expression of that response, which is the actual subject of a man's work. It is by no legerdemain but by a deep absorptive process of the intelligence that we come to speak most satisfactorily of a man's work by the mere abstract handle of his name. With the name, as we are able, we put on the power; forgetting the name we sometimes come on the glory; or again, if we can enough divest ourselves, come on both the ignominy and the glory.

It is astonishing, generally, how much the poems here collected tell about each other in the way of prediction and illumination, of obsession and insight, of the strength of form and the agony of formulation, of poverty, of means and of the riches secured and even predetermined by those means. The unity of the work taken together as a form of response is indefeasible, and creates, among the fragments of the separate poems, a kind of inevitable involvement which is a virtual unity of substance. It is the more astonishing, specifically, how much the latest poem in the book, *Burnt Norton*, both depends on all the earlier poems as their inalienable product and adds to them critically and emphatically. *Burnt Norton* makes the earlier poems grow and diminish, as it illuminates them or shows them up. Yet

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it is not easy to say what the poem is about as a matter of fact. There is a central image, the whole of part *III*, of a number of people riding in a subway train; it is an image of a spiritual, or non-spiritual, condition of which inescapable analogues assault us all. Associated with this image is an image of a rose garden with a pool, various flowers, singing birds and laughing children. Superimposed throughout are Eliot's intense and elaborated meditated versions of the two fragments of Heraclitus which form his epigraph, one about words and the other about the identity of the soul in change. Thus we get a great deal about time, a great deal in one place about the pattern or form of words (the problem of the imagination faced with actuality), and a great deal about the still point of the turning world. The poem is what happens when these elements and others not easy to name unite under the impact of the most Eliot is able to apply of the auditory imagination: that imagination which reaches down into the syllables of words, into the roots both of meaning and sound, and brings the words up newly alive.

I do not know how far, on this new level of abstraction, Mr. Eliot has made his words new and how far he has been compelled to use words worn, or moribund, or plainly dead; there are passages which read like emptied formulae from other poems; time will tell the responsive ear and the waiting intelligence. Meanwhile, it seems to me conspicuously important to say that the frames of the words used, the specific symbols, the obsessive feelings, the whole apparatus

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of Eliot's *private* clues to reality are the same here as in the earlier poems. It is the same material throughout that the poetic process is meant to make actual. I do not mean that Eliot is re-working *Ash Wednesday* or that *Ash Wednesday* re-worked *The Waste Land*, or that *Lear* re-worked *Hamlet*. I mean that the identity of poetic means shows a fundamental response to identic material made on different levels of a unifying sensibility. A different level is secured by the incorporation of a different or *specific* approach into the poetic process. Here Eliot attempts to incorporate the approach of the abstracting, schematizing intellect into a process essentially dramatic and concrete. The question is how far the abstract can reach into the realm of the concrete without benefit of a driving or dramatic form — which is here absent; and the specific difficulty would seem to be to make the outline or regimen of such a meditation clear without that benefit. *Burnt Norton* will seem successful, perhaps, if the earlier poems supply the lack; it will fail if it remains a mere appended commentary upon the material of the other poems.

R. P. Blackmur

THE CRITIC AS PROPHET

Essays Ancient and Modern, by T. S. Eliot. Harcourt, Brace & Company.

Mr. Eliot's purpose in this volume seems to have been to compile a *Tractatus Contra Gentiles* if not a *Summa* from the essays that he has written since his conversion. Of the

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ten chapters, five are carried over from *For Lancelot Andrewes*; the rest are more recent and previously uncollected. Whatever the topic, all deal more or less directly with religious issues, and with one or two exceptions they are polemical in tone and in intention.

Religion and Literature argues the thesis that theological and ethical considerations should enter into any critical judgment which pretends to be complete. This is not meant to suggest that all "religious" literature treats of a specifically theological subject, or has a devotional or propagandistic aim. Everything that we read affects us, however subtly, as entire human beings, and therefore must be judged by other than purely "esthetic" standards. Eliot concludes that the orthodox Christian must demand the right kind of effect from the books that he reads, and that he must be on his guard against the influences of those authors "who have no real belief in a supernatural order."

Another of the new essays, *Catholicism and International Order*, is an attack on humanitarian heresies. It criticizes secular attempts at reform, such as the League of Nations, on the ground that heretics always have "low ideals and high expectations," and suggests that only orthodoxy can supply a middle way. By a similar line of procedure, *Modern Education and the Classics* exposes brilliantly certain widespread aberrations of liberal and radical schemes of education, and draws the conclusion that the only hope for the proper study of the classics lies in the "revival and expansion of monastic teaching orders," which will preserve edu-

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cation "within the cloister, uncontaminated by the deluge of barbarism outside."

Polemic writings in general may be divided into two classes: one designed to refute the honest doubts of the infidel and win him from the error of his ways, the other to confirm the faithful in their opinions and gird them for combat. These essays belong in the latter class. Their author assumes an audience who shares his convictions, and he does not hesitate to caricature the adversary and call him names. That Eliot so often adopts the manner of Parson Thwackum is cause for some regret, for he has a number of things to say from which anyone could profit. The orthodox tradition contains much wisdom for believers and heretics alike, and a less petulant exposition of it would make us all better men and better writers. Eliot tells us that only the orthodox thinker "is compelled to examine all his premises, and try to start from the fundamental terms and propositions"; if Eliot has done so, he continues to keep that examination to himself. His premises are not examined but assumed, whenever they appear in his writings.

These comments apply in less degree, however, to the essays on Pascal and Tennyson, where Eliot descends from the general to the particular. His remarks about Tennyson are of special interest, because Eliot did more than anyone else to inoculate his own and the succeeding literary generation against bad Tennyson, with which poets were deeply infected around 1910, and from which, indeed, our flabbier versifiers are still suffering. His serum worked so well that

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many were also rendered immune to good Tennyson, which was a pity. Mr. Eliot now makes amends handsomely.

Philip Blair Rice

A DEFENSE OF POETRY

The Achievement of T. S. Eliot, by F. O. Matthiessen.
Houghton Mifflin Company

A serious and comprehensive study of T. S. Eliot, either as critic or as poet, is likely to involve an encounter with almost every important literary problem. Mr. Matthiessen's study is serious and comprehensive, and he is perfectly aware of what it involves. His awareness is explicit in a preface which, together with a recent essay¹ by R. S. Crane, may be considered an intimation of an advance in criticism. While Mr. Matthiessen's statement has perhaps neither the precision nor the general significance of Mr. Crane's, it rests upon the same distinctions. Both essays indicate the poem as the object of critical research, rather than the poet or the reader; and both, while admitting the validity of other avenues of approach, carefully distinguish it from that of criticism proper.

Such distinctions, steadily borne in mind, can hardly fail to clarify and enrich criticism. Unfortunately Mr. Matthiessen does not bear them steadily in mind; his chapter headings from first to last — from *Tradition and the Individual Talent* to *The Sense of His Own Age* — testify that the

¹ *History versus Criticism in the University Study of Literature*, in the *English Journal* (College Edition), XXIV (1935), 645-667.

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subject of his essay is not the poem but the poet. This is not true of Hugh Ross Williamson, whom I think Mr. Matthiessen dismisses too airily; Mr. Williamson's analysis of *The Waste Land*, for instance, is mainly on the grammatical level, and is not really an analysis at all, but it does concern the poem.

Certainly it is difficult to dissociate one's appreciation of a work from one's appreciation of the man who created it; but the most intimate correlation is not identity; the fact remains that skill and personal excellence are not the work or art. And the difficulty remotely consequential to the identification of the work with the artist is greater than the immediate one of distinguishing between them; for the last result of such identification is that the study of character is substituted for the study of poetry.

In a sense the person largely responsible for the present neglect of literature in literary criticism is Mr. Eliot himself. In the face of his own repeated insistence that the poem is the proper object of criticism, this statement may sound absurd, but I do not think it is. There is some discrepancy between Mr. Eliot's premises and his sequiturs, between his axioms and the criticism constructed from them. Observe, for instance, the inconsistency of his assumption that a work of art is "autotelic" with the essay in which it occurs, and indeed with the whole structure of which this essay — *The Function of Criticism* — is an important basement. Consider, too, whether the subject of the Dante essays is the poetry or the poet. And remark whether the

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criteria underlying his judgments are those of art or of ethics. I am not suggesting that the approach from which Mr. Eliot's criticism derives is a wrong one, even an unprofitable one; I am suggesting simply that it may be less profitable than one developed from more purely critical distinctions.

I have said "less profitable." I have in mind certain instances in which critics have failed, through no fault of their sensitivity but wholly through the limitations of their approach. Mr. Eliot's failure to understand *Hamlet* might be cited as one; another, much more pertinent here, is the general failure of critics to understand the poetry of Mr. Eliot. For the grammatical difficulties of his allusive technique have been, I think, overstressed; even with the greater part of the allusions in *The Waste Land* tracked down, the problem of its *form* — the *poetic* problem — remains. Mr. Matthiessen has scarcely touched upon it; Mr. Williamson has said nothing that might persuade one that the elements of the poem are in anything more than material conjunction; Mr. Richards' suggestion that the poem is "a music of ideas" is of the order of vicious analogy that has retarded prosody for centuries and that, permitted, will retard poetics as well. Until a criticism subtle and exquisite as itself appears, Mr. Eliot's poetry is likely to remain excellent for the vaguest of reasons only, together with the rest of the finest poetry. In the meantime Mr. Matthiessen's book is a promise that such a criticism is not utterly remote.

Elder Olson

Iowa Exteriors

IOWA EXTERIORS

Elephants at War, by Thomas W. Duncan. Prairie Press,
Muscatine, Iowa.

Thomas Duncan, whose first novel has been well received, has published an unpretentious first volume of verse that contains intelligent, though not particularly evocative poems of Iowa, his native state. He employs no new and startling idiom: his technique is traditionally conventional, but there is able craftsmanship here.

He is familiar with drought, tornado, "black plowed fields," and "naked apple trees"; unfortunately he does not see these things with sufficient originality to distinguish his talent from that of a dozen others. He sees "low hills looming starkly brown," "baked prairies," and "stubble-fields in liquid heat" as every Iowa poet before him must have seen them. Again, unfortunately with less frequency, he startles one with images such as "the yellow wigwams of stacked oats"; "in green gloom . . . fat earthen jars of swimming cream dripped sweat"; or "the clouds were copper horses slowly turning." Mr. Duncan's delineations of village character are clear-cut and plausible, but triteness and stock perceptions too often mar his portraits. He can write critically and realistically about such lay characters as the village half-wit and the love-sick bumpkin; but his people remain broad generalizations and overdrawn types, rather than individuals.

"Soil" literature must have something more than the "sweet dry scent of dust" or vignettes of farmwives who

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bravely smile in spite of drought because "a butterfly lifts peacock wings and soars against the sky." And poets who write it must have some closer contact with earth than they find by such poetic dancing and roaming. *Lionel Wiggam*

COMMENT

The Friday Club of Chicago has presented to POETRY a gift of \$200 in memory of Harriet Monroe. The Editors of the magazine are deeply grateful for this generous recognition of its founder from the members of a society to which she belonged for many years. POETRY has been long indebted to the Friday Club for subscriptions to the Guaranty Fund and for other gifts which have been used for prizes on our November lists. The present memorial gift is to be used at the discretion of the Editors, and comes as a valuable incentive to their present efforts to continue POETRY in the purposes for which it was founded by Harriet Monroe twenty-five years ago.

We would urge the friends, subscribers, and contributors to POETRY to offer as soon as possible any assistance they can make toward securing the continuation of the magazine. This may take the form of annual subscriptions to the Guaranty Fund (of \$50 or more), supporting subscriptions of \$10 a year, and regular yearly subscriptions, singly or in groups. Larger gifts to the Guaranty Fund will be especially welcomed, since the future life of the magazine will depend very largely upon the stability provided by a substantial basic subsidy. We would urge all those interested in any way in this enterprise to communicate with the Editors for further information.

Random House has just issued W. H. Auden's new book of verse, *On This Island*. This volume appeared in London last autumn under the title *Look, Stranger!* and was reviewed in our January English Number by C. Day Lewis. It is understood that Random House will also publish this spring, in a revised form, Auden's and Isherwood's play, *The Ascent of F 6*, which Mr. Lewis also reviewed for us. In England Faber & Faber now announce the early appearance of a book on *Iceland* by Auden and Louis MacNeice, who visited that island together last summer.

Comment

Other Faber & Faber publications of the spring are *Cantos XLII-LI* by Ezra Pound, a cheap edition of the *Anabasis* of St.-J. Perse as translated by T. S. Eliot, *The Ten Principal Upanishads* as "put into English" by W. B. Yeats and Shri Purohit Swami, Charles Madge's first book of *Poems*, the Fitts-Fitzgerald translation of the *Alcestis*, René Hague's prose translation of the *Song of Roland*, and two books of criticism, *Polite Essays* by Ezra Pound and *The Modern Mind* by Michael Roberts.

The Yale University Press announces that the competition for the 1937 addition to the Yale Series of Younger Poets will be open from April 1st to May 1st. Full details may be learned from the Press at New Haven. Stephen Vincent Benét is again the editor in charge.

The 1936 volume, numbered XXI, of *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association*, published by the Oxford Press, includes several papers of much interest to students of modern poetry: *A Note on the Verse of John Milton* by T. S. Eliot, *Coleridge's Critical Terminology* by J. Isaacs, and an excellent analytical essay on Hopkins' *Wreck of the Deutschland* by W. H. Gardner.

It was a pleasure to see, now that poetry has almost wholly disappeared from the New York magazines, that *The Forum* offered in its February issue four pages of verse by "Fifteen New Poets," as selected by Horace Gregory. These poets were Robert Fitzgerald, Winfield Scott, Elizabeth Bishop, Muriel Rukeyser, David Schubert, William Stephens, James Agee, T. C. Wilson, Edwin Rolfe, Selden Rodman, Clark Mills, David Wolff, Archibald Fleming, Eunice Clark, and Josephine Miles. Twelve of these poets have appeared in *POETRY*.

Mr. David Schubert lives in Brooklyn, N. Y. Last November he received the Jeannette Sewell Davis Prize in *POETRY* for *Kind Valentine*, and his first volume of verse is to be published in the near future by the Alcestis Press of New York.

Miss Clara Shanafelt, of New York, was a contributor to *POETRY* twenty years ago, but lately has written little poetry.

Mr. Sherman Conrad, of Washington, D. C., was born in Buffalo in 1911, graduated from Harvard in 1933, and has recently been employed in the statistical division of the Federal Emergency Relief.

Reitza Dine (Mrs. Zoltón Wirtschafter), of Cincinnati, has worked as a librarian and teacher of music as well as in poetry.

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Miss Florence Ripley Mastin, of Brooklyn, is the author of *Cables of Cobweb* (1934). Mr. Kenneth Slade Alling lives in New York City.

The other poets of this issue appear in POETRY for the first time:

Frederico Garcia Lorca was a distinguished Spanish poet who, it is now known, was killed by the rebel forces last autumn. His lyrics have been translated by Mr. Rolfe Humphries of New York, whose book of verse, *Europa*, appeared in 1929.

Mr. Donagh MacDonagh, of Dublin, Ireland, is a son of the Irish poet and patriot, Thomas MacDonagh, who was arrested and executed by the British after the Easter Rising of 1916. He has appeared in *The Dublin Magazine*, *The Criterion*, and elsewhere.

Miss Katharine Garvin, of London, graduated from Somerville College, Oxford, in 1926, and now, after several years of teaching and study at several American universities, including four years on the faculty of Bryn Mawr College, is writing and working at research in England. Her verse and criticism have been published in various magazines, and she has written *The Great Tudors*.

Miss Emma Swan, of New York City, is a student at Bennington College, Vt. Miss Elda Tanasso, of Harrison, N. Y., is a senior student at the College of New Rochelle. Leila Jones (Mrs. Russell L. J.), of Southport, Conn., is the author of *Assent to Autumn*, published by the Stephen Daye Press in 1933. Mr. Hallock Marsh sends us his poem from Chignik, Alaska.

BOOKS RECEIVED

ORIGINAL VERSE:

On This Island, by W. H. Auden. Random House.

The Poems of Emily Dickinson. Ed. by Martha Dickinson Bianchi and Alfred Leete Hampson. Little, Brown & Co.

Shakespeare's Sonnets. Edited by Tucker Brooke. Oxford Univ. Press.

The Golden Fleece of California, by Edgar Lee Masters. Farrar & Rinehart.

Straight or Curly? by Clifford Dyment. J. M. Dent & Sons, London.

Address to the Living, by John Holmes. Henry Holt & Co.

They Say the Forties —, by Howard Mumford Jones. Henry Holt & Co.

Saltwater Farm, by Robert P. Tristram Coffin. Macmillan Co.

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In its first years it was the publisher, usually for the first time in America or elsewhere, of Lindsay, Lawrence, Pound, Eliot, Masters, Yeats, Sandburg, the Imagists, Joyce, Frost, Tagore, De la Mare, and the other poets of their generation. It has continued to print their later work, but has kept alive to the younger talents of the following years — Elinor Wylie, Edna Millay, Louise Bogan, Hart Crane, Allen Tate, Ernest Hemingway, Leonie Adams, George Dillon, W. H. Auden, Stephen Spender, Stanley Kunitz, Horace Gregory, Robert Penn Warren, and many others.

It has published many special numbers and its critics include the keenest talents in the analysis and judgment of poetry.

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From among a great variety of material in recent issues of THE SOUTHERN REVIEW — articles, fiction, poetry, reviews — the following should be of particular interest to readers of modern poetry:

In the Summer, 1936, issue —

Symbolic War, by *Kenneth Burke*

The Greenberg MS and Hart Crane's Poetry, by
Philip Horton

Poets of Five Decades, by *Morton Dauwen Zabel*
Contemporary Criticism, by *F. Cudworth Flint*

In the Autumn, 1936, issue —

The Later Poetry of William Butler Yeats, by *R. P.
Blackmur*

Mr. Burke and the Historical Environment, by *Allen
Tate*

Poets and Laureates, by *Cleanth Brooks, Jr.*

Seven Poems, by *Randall Jarrell* (winner of THE
SOUTHERN REVIEW prize)

In the Winter, 1937, issue —

T. S. Eliot and Dante, by *Mario Praz*

The Composition in Nine Poets, by *R. P. Blackmur*
Ode to the Sea (and other poems), by *Howard Baker*

And in the current number (Spring, 1937) —

Edna St. Vincent Millay, by *John Crowe Ransom*

From Jordan's Delight, by *R. P. Blackmur*

A Review of Recent Poetry, by *F. O. Matthiessen*

THE
SOUTHERN REVIEW

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I have read POETRY since the first number and find it constantly entertaining... No other poetry magazine—and there have been dozens of them—has even remotely approached it in interest, or, for that matter, in genuine hospitality to ideas.

—H. L. Mencken

Vol. L

No. II

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The Cover Designed by Eric Gill

Manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped and self-addressed envelope or by international coupons from poets living abroad. Otherwise we must decline hereafter to return them and they will be destroyed.

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Poetry

A Magazine of Verse

VOL. L
No. II

MAY 1937

THE MAN WITH THE BLUE GUITAR

I

I CANNOT bring a world quite round,
Although I patch it as I can.

I sing a hero's head, large eye
And bearded bronze, but not a man,

Although I patch him as I can
And reach through him almost to man.

If to serenade almost to man
Is to miss, by that, things as they are,

Say that it is the serenade
Of a man that plays a blue guitar.

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II

And the color, the overcast blue
Of the air, in which the blue guitar
Is a form, described but difficult,
And I am merely a shadow hunched
Above the arrowy, still strings,
The maker of a thing yet to be made;
The color like a thought that grows
Out of a mood, the tragic robe
Of the actor, half his gesture, half
His speech, the dress of his meaning, silk
Sodden with his melancholy words,
The weather of his stage, himself.

III

Is this picture of Picasso's, this "hoard
Of destructions," a picture of ourselves,
Now, an image of our society?
Do I sit, deformed, a naked egg,
Catching at Good-bye, harvest moon,
Without seeing the harvest or the moon?
Things as they are have been destroyed.
Have I? Am I a man that is dead

Wallace Stevens

At a table on which the food is cold?
Is my thought a memory, not alive?

Is the spot on the floor, there, wine or blood
And whichever it may be, is it mine?

IV

The person has a mould. But not
Its animal. The angelic ones

Speak of the soul, the mind. It is
An animal. The blue guitar —

On that its claws propound, its fangs
Articulate its desert days.

The blue guitar a mould? That shell?
Well, after all, the north wind blows

A horn, on which its victory
Is a worm composing in a straw.

V

A dream (to call it a dream) in which
I can believe, in face of the object,

A dream no longer a dream, a thing,
Of things as they are, as the blue guitar

After long strumming on certain nights
Gives the touch of the senses, not of the hand,

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But the very senses as they touch
The wind-gloss. Or as daylight comes,
Like light in a mirroring of cliffs,
Rising upward from a sea of ex.

VI

A few final solutions, like a duet
With the undertaker: a voice in the clouds,
Another on earth, the one a voice
Of ether, the other smelling of drink,
The voice of ether prevailing, the swell
Of the undertaker's song in the snow
Apostrophizing wreaths, the voice
In the clouds serene and final, next
The grunted breath serene and final,
The imagined and the real, thought
And the truth, Dichtung and Wahrheit, all
Confusion solved, as in a refrain
One keeps on playing year by year,
Concerning the nature of things as they are.

VII

A poem like a missal found
In the mud, a missal for that young man,

Wallace Stevens

That scholar hungriest for that book,
The very book, or, less, a page

Or, at the least, a phrase, that phrase,
A hawk of life, that latined phrase:

To know; a missal for brooding-sight.
To meet that hawk's eye and to flinch

Not at the eye but at the joy of it.
I play. But this is what I think.

VIII

It is the sea that whitens the roof.
The sea drifts through the winter air.

It is the sea that the north wind makes.
The sea is in the falling snow.

This gloom is the darkness of the sea.
Geographers and philosophers,

Regard. But for that salty cup,
But for the icicles on the eaves —

The sea is a form of ridicule.
The iceberg settings satirize

The demon that cannot be himself,
That tours to shift the shifting scene.

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IX

I am a native in this world
And think in it as a native thinks,

Gesu, not native of a mind
Thinking the thoughts I call my own,

Native, a native in the world
And like a native think in it.

It could not be a mind, the wave
In which the watery grasses flow

And yet are fixed as a photograph,
The wind in which the dead leaves blow.

Here I inhale profounder strength
And as I am, I speak and move

And things are as I think they are
And say they are on the blue guitar.

X

In the cathedral, I sat there, and read,
Alone, a lean Review and said,

“These degustations in the vaults
Oppose the past and the festival.

What is beyond the cathedral, outside,
Balances with nuptial song.

Wallace Stevens

So it is to sit and to balance things
To and to and to the point of still,

To say of one mask it is like,
To say of another it is like,

To know that the balance does not quite rest,
That the mask is strange, however like."

The shapes are wrong and the sounds are false.
The bells are the bellowings of bulls.

Yet Franciscan don was never more
Himself than in this fertile glass.

xI

From this I shall evolve a man.
This is his essence: the old fanteche

Hanging his shawl upon the wind,
Like something on the stage, puffed out,

His strutting studied through centuries.
At last, in spite of his manner, his eye

A-cock at the cross-piece on a pole
Supporting heavy cables, slung

Through Oxidia, banal suburb,
One-half of all its installments paid.

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Dew-dapper clapper-traps, blazing
From crusty stacks above machines.

Ecce, Oxidia is the seed
Dropped out of this amber-ember pod,

Oxidia is the soot of fire,
Oxidia is Olympia.

xii

How long and late the pheasant sleeps . . .
The employer and employee contend,

Combat, compose their droll affair.
The bubbling sun will bubble up,

Spring sparkle and the cock-bird shriek.
The employer and employee will hear

And continue their affair. The shriek
Will rack the thickets. There is no place,

Here, for the lark fixed in the mind,
In the museum of the sky. The cock

Will claw sleep. Morning is not sun.
It is this posture of the nerves,

As if a blunted player clutched
The nuances of the blue guitar.

Wallace Stevens

It must be this rhapsody or none,
The rhapsody of things as they are.

XIII

That generation's dream, aviled
In the mud, in Monday's dirty light,

That's it, the only dream they knew,
Time in its final block, not time

To come, a wrangling of two dreams.
Here is the bread of time to come,

Here is its actual stone. The bread
Will be our bread, the stone will be

Our bed and we shall sleep by night.
We shall forget by day, except

The moments when we choose to play
The imagined pine, the imagined jay.

Wallace Stevens

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BROUGHT BACK

WHITE HIGHWAYS

I have gone out to the roads that go up and down
In smooth white lines, stoneless and hard;
I have seen distances shortened between two points,
The hills pushed back and bridges thrust across
The shallow river's span.

To the broad highways, and back again I have come
To the creekbed roads and narrow winding trails
Worn into ruts by hoofs and steady feet;
I have come back to the long way around,
The far between, the slow arrival.
Here is my pleasure most where I have lived
And called my home.

O do not wander far
From the roottree and the hill-gathered earth;
Go not upon these wayfares measured with a line
Drawn hard and white from birth to death.
O quiet and slow is peace, and curved with space
Brought back again to this warm homing place.

EARTH-BREAD

Under stars cool as the copperhead's eyes,
Under hill-horizons cut clean and deft with wind,

James Still

Beneath this surface night, below earth and rock
The picks strike into veins of coal, oily and rich
And centuries-damp.

They dig with short heavy strokes, straining shoulders
Practiced and bulging with labor,
Crumbling the marrow between the shelving slate,
Breaking the hard, slow-yielding seams.
Bent into flesh-knots the miners dig this earth-bread,
This stone-meat, these fruited bones.

This is the eight-hour death, the daily burial
In a dark harvest lost as any dead.

James Still

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A SIGN AWAITED

WILD ORANGES

Still with awed inner sight I see that tree
Bending beneath its secret flower and fruit
In the wild lonely marsh-land, strange to see
As an enchanted tree of fairy root.

Forever shall the small bright orange burn
Unplucked upon the bough, the bloom unbroken
Be loud with bees, forever these return
To grieve me like a lovely word unspoken

Till I go back, for bitter sorrow's sake
And touch the shining bloom and taste the wine
Of the wild acid orange, and so make
Part of its strict and lonely meaning mine.

ONCE I CALLED TIME

Once I called time by pretty names
Thinking I saw time's meaning clearly,
Like dropping petals, falling flames,
Or shadows moving by austerely.

Now suddenly I am caught and whirled
In a hurricane of time. Unwary

Marjorie Meeker

And lost, my chaos-colored world
I snatch at, bright and fragmentary.

An hour's indulgence for the eye
Time gives, a moment's haunted greeting.
Too late I saw your face whirl by
And knew your heart's stupendous beating.

BAY OF DOLPHINS

From a dark dream, out of deep sorrow waking,
I saw the narrow moon hung like a warning
Over the Bay of Dolphins, before the breaking
Of light — It was the slender moon of morning,

The curved thin moon, with clear and crystal light gleaming,
With limpid light. Alarmed I could not shut
Its silver portent out as ominous dreaming . . .
Cold on my heart its crystal scar is cut.

THE DAY BEFORE THE STORM

I went to walk the day before the storm
The sky too fiery blue, the hot gold air
Hushed with a stillness like a bright alarm,
Weather too sultry gold for breath to share.
I saw the bay's blue waters ebb'd beyond
The lowest spot where fallen tides should be,

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The wave-marked mud flats flaked off like a pond
Drying with summer though smelling of the sea.

Heat ached upon my eyelids. People trod
The earth bewildered by the pressure of light.
So in a burning forest from his hole
The fox runs blindly in amazed mute fright.
So fish gasp choking in a lessening pool.
So men await a sign, a storm, a God.

Marjorie Meeker

CALIFORNIA HILLS

You would not need to flaunt yourself for me,
With plum-red mouth and lupine in your hair,
And the sweet shamelessness of shoulders bare;
I should not need your grape-blue wine to be
Tempted to love. This would be ecstasy
Enough — if sometime you would let me share
The quiet of your tears, the still despair
Of winter's frosty-fingered treachery.

You are too kind — when I should be content
With half your favors, half your beauty spent;
You spill your wine and waste your mad perfume.
Behind my crowding pulse there is not room
For the high bright desire that you awake.
Withhold your beauty or my heart will break!

Doris Caldwell

CALENTURE

The sharp end of a feather scratching the cheek
awakens you four hours from daybreak,
the fingers paddling in light on the coverlet;
the wagons rumble by, by the cow-brye
the small boys cheer and stamp, each head of hair
escapes the tyranny of comb and water;
these have no fear of any standard author,
these are who do not worry about being dead.

Return to the angel on the coverlet
the moderately clean nails, the discreet mole,
the nicotine, the callous of pen or pencil;
consider the many knives and forks you handle,
the levers you release, the girls you fondle,
the gloves you wear, the wearing flesh you touch,
old valiant claw, old besom, old Jack with an itch.

The curtains are filled with wind, the shaving water
cools on the marble top, the mirror flashes
and here we are again at the end of the week
the cheerful clowns among the enchanting foothills,
while all around us the candid ridiculous years
parade, tone-deaf to the music of the spheres.

Enumerate your riches, get them by heart,
there's not a sheet of the calendar we'll destroy;
the mottoes will refute us with lively art,

POETRY: A Magazine of Verse

the ruder than Gothic on the King's Highway;
the pins in the tidy are numbered off and treasured,
with callipers the length of each leaf is measured;
the hinds and their wives are jogging to the fair
what smacking, what buying of comfits, awaits them there.

To emulate the cactus in endurance;
maybe the door flung open, the sheets kicked down,
the blankets dropped like cities upon the matting,
and everywhere it is summer's cornucopia
poured out in colors and contours to gratify sense,
conjugation of active summer in the present tense.

All this beeswax and froth is here at once
drugging the libraries and croquet-lawns,
quartering like jesters the profuse hedges,
the shadows making stand under ancient bridges;
spinning off the urchin's mirror or gilt weathervane
a buttercup burst from the Shetlands to melting Spain.

We come to a center in a place like this
as a dozen houses perched between the mountains,
as church and general-store, and school and rectory,
the single telephone wire, the cemetery
climbing the concave side of the mountain
so that the topmost stones lean over you
and the angels and the draped funereal urns
adding a tipsy relish to the past and present.

Enumerate I say these solid blessings,

Kenneth Allott

go home across the fields to an evening meal
with afterwards a book or an album of records
and do not worry too much about tomorrow
and hear the boy whistling drive home the cattle
and do not think too much about being happy
standing with a stub of candle in the hall
but with the whole world now go up to bed
and let your sleeping hand clutch the coverlet.

Kenneth Allott

CHRYSLER BUILDING

Never again in our time
Shall such pinnacles leap to the sky.
These fabulous towering spires,
These airy mountains of glass,
Are the signature of an age —
A way of life that must pass.

The delicate petals of stone,
The leaves of silvered steel,
The brassy gargoyles that fling
Their snouts to the imminent sky
Are praise of a greatness that lied,
Are wreaths for a world that has died.

Madeleine Ruthven

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

IN THESE GARDENS

LES VOYAGEURS

We have left home
to explore other regions
forsaking the fireside
for a barren camp on the beach
that at night we may watch the stars
not through a mist of commonplaces
for as the smoke of a city obscures the sky
the familiarity of the earth
destroys the splendor of the heavens.

ANTITHHEME

"On the bo leaves. . . ."
In the gardens
petals fall in the stream
Trout drift over the pebbles.
By the gates
A sage robed in silk:
. . . hath the wisdom of ages.
There is a sound of music from the cedar groves
And the words of lovers who lie by the lake.

"And in the diary of a beautiful
"but unintelligent lady.
"(who would fain writes books)"

David L. McCaughey

Past this dance-hall
 runs a stream
And the boys sit on the stair rails
 drinking cheap wine and beer
And throw cigaret butts in the stream
 and a droning music
Comes from the hall; and in the hall
 a rank odor
And lewd talk and "Open gestures."

The philosopher says, "These are equal."

DIRGE (ANDANTE)

Not light of sun
Not fires of morn
Nor evening's hues
Nor dirge forlorn.

No birds singing in the dews
While young lambs to pasture run

You are gone and only sleep
Cruel sleep, not peaceful rest
Conquers you, as chill grey seas
Shoulder surf upon their breast

You no longer walk these leas
Uncaresed by clouds that weep

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None of these, but lasting death,
Sad forgetfulness are yours
Not the grape upon the vine
Nor the surf upon far shores

Nor the shelter of the pine
Nor flowers gay, nor lover's breath.

L'AUTOMNE

This beauty of all the year
Most fruitful.
Warmth of summer
Swept away by cruel winds, cool rains.
And the even pressure of sunlight
Now scattered over maples.

In these gardens
Flowers are torn and scattered
Petals blown over the vines
And the pines shake
North wind snapping their branches.
Bending the broom, withered
Wilted-wet stalks;
While the waves grey and roughen
Spray breaking over cliff-base
Showering up to the gardens.
Honeysuckle mixing with salt-tang,
Late roses caught in sea-foam.

David L. McCaughey

As we stand by the beach,
Unceasing the wave under a leaden sky;
And we have thought of the sparkling waters
Of summer, at Aeaea, on the west shores
Or later, the wave round Scio's rocky isle!

David L. McCaughey

CROW ON THE HUSK

Jed's walking in his sleep on the sidewalk,
Crows deploy in the Square from a starved country.
Migratory fields remember, cornflower and chinch bug,
Chinch bug and cornflower, and migratory factories
Creep through his cracked shoes, bursting at the seam,
Emmitting the plough, the meadow, first violet, first dream;
First star first fathers saw. Tractor and tank dismember
The mutilated plain; Jed's walking in the city —
Immortally, eternally, the seed expels the flower —
Rewinding the film of smoke and self-pity.

The kids in paper-bags, hour after hour,
Hunted potatoes, dug in the flour barrel. Someone else
Is hanging the clothes line to one end of the empty cow shed.

The crow is shot by the medieval man whom Gabriel touches
In blue snow behind the American barn.

Who sees nor knows nor feels; but eats the hole —
The small earth falls apart — where was a soul.

David Schubert

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

MICHOACÁN: TWO SCENES

COVE ON THE ORILLA

For hours, through stifling thickets, we heard the Pacific
Thunder below the trail, but never came near it.
We did not talk. We were lost. The mules were our betters.
Ordeal — to long for the sea and only hear it!
Twenty days . . . And before us the path stopped blind in
the clutching,
Poisonous growth, where no wanderer, frantic to pass, could
clear it.

Ramiro held to the tail of La Brisa. The burros
Fought on up one more hill, my Rabbit ahead,
When air like a kindly blow from the hand of an angel
against us
Struck courage back. We looked. Our lips were unlocked.
We said
"It is worth the days, worth this last unmerciful morning."
For no one alive had seen the place; perhaps not even the
dead!

Sheer from the mule's still hoofs the cliff to the ocean
Fell with never a foothold, half circling a cove
With glittering sands and water as gentle and crystal
As a little pool in a meadow. Surf, ravaging, drove
At gates of dark rock and fell back. For what cycles, un-
troubled,

Marian Storm

Had the shore slept, a secret, here in the sun while its
creatures thrrove?

Lazily from the abyss through the shallows, her forelimbs
waving,

A leathery turtle swam for ancestral sand.

We had traveled ten million years! In the lighted water
Black, monstrous forms were peacefully passing. The strand
Had been her kind's since her sisters were turning to fossils
And these ranges reared their length and the ocean was land.

COAST PANTHER

Three nights he drank the living blood of cattle
Hot from the artery. Three moonless nights
He cleared the palings, killed with single bites —
And now what desperate folly to return!
Yet salt blood springing from a throat is heaven.
With new contempt for man, and dogs, his chattel,
He left the cave a little after seven,
To shun the dangerous moon. They never learn!
The smell of heifers made his gullet burn.
His length among dry brush moved on like mist.

Hot country ranchers, they have slept with danger.
Cattle are life, and grimly are defended.
They had a welcome waiting for the stranger.
Before the first hours of the vigil ended,
Their yelping mongrels told of his retreat.

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Stubbornly, all night long, through armed acacias,
Fifty feet followed on his soundless feet.
From cover to cover hunted ruthlessly,
He left his cave again, to take the chance or
Perish. He turned. They neared. The leading lancer
Gripped with his free hand at his trembling wrist.

Perish? But still — who knew? — the headland boulders,
Where combers catch the fools who dash between . . .
It seemed the brute was running for the sea!
That lonely beach, so much his world, and spacious,
Held not a cavern he had never seen.
Close, close — The sun struck splendor from his shoulders!
Killing that last hope, morning broke serene.
“He went up into a pánicua tree.”

But once the hunter comes on such a vision —
A golden panther high in yellow flowers,
Treed by the sunrise burnishing the wave.
Though jungles shall devour what devours,
The lancer felt a second's indecision —
Knew how, uncalled, through dim and elder hours
This victim would go with them to the grave:
The golden beast above in yellow flowers,
Staring out motionless on jeopardy.

Marian Storm

SLOW INVASION

ESCAPE INTO APRIL

It is a long way from the troubled town.
I shall lay me down

here where love blows like a leaf lost,
where there is no frost,

where a dream argues the death of an old duty.
I am yours, O Beauty.

Take me, to whom your language is given.
To your presence I am driven.

From the tall town and its noise I have fled.
I am no longer dead,

I am no longer buried where people are dying
from an old denying.

Take me. Hold me again and again.
I am your fugitive stumbling out of pain.

FIRST FROST

How soon the articulate hands of autumn lay
their chill on all the beauty they shall mourn for,
snatching its image from the light of day.
And is it this cold tyranny we are born for,

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ushered into, imperiled against the frost
for saner reasons than our hearts remember?
We have been taught to weigh the greatest cost
of flame against the dead remaining ember.

We have been tutored to slake the mind's desire
upon the frail firm mystery of the soul,
told beyond grief that beauty and breath expire
to form a deathless cycle of the whole.

But what shall avail for this incipient cold,
this dread that offers all warmth and hunger to lease?
Even as we tremble, so shall the hands grow old
that steal the memory nurtured out of peace.

O fragile body, your summer fades and is over —
bear now the frigid, the merciless, the denied;
shake down the fruited tree, forget the clover.
By this first frost you know you have not died.

WINTER LOVE

And now the eloquent body of earth shall be
rapturously stilled by the voice of a white season.
Its clamor for life is treason.
It waits, but its destiny

is turbulent within, where the roots squirm
to push outward, and the thin dry stem

Lola Pergament

of an old flower holds a blossoming germ.
So it is with earth, so it is with them.

You shall poise your eloquent body and still your song.
The voice of your winter love shall take its rapture.
Now in its season shall your drouth be long,
shall you be disturbed, knowing no way to recapture

a young madness that the earth can cherish,
and the roots nurture, and the flower wave in spring.
Holding your winter love . . . so shall you perish
in a white season before the blossoming.

BRIEF REFUGE

This is the disabused moment of your slumber
when the querulous dream is given to nothingness.
There is no gaudy image to encumber
your peace or augur distress.

Now, to all living creatures shall come a pause
neither of rhythm nor of the hour's subtleties,
but out of a deep slumber that draws
yourself oblivious to these.

Wherefore, into the din and the quick peopled air
I go, blindly as a lover and by love distraught
that you have found brief refuge anywhere,
wrapped in a peace that I have never caught.

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FOR SURVIVAL

There is a time for iron and for stone.
They are the mask, the firm, the hard device,
they are the flesh that freezes on the bone,
over the heart like ice.

Yet men are not wiser who deny the bold
slow tears that prove the delicacy of sense.
The rigid lip is but a dream untold.
The hand gone stiff is not indifference.

This bruise that bends or achingly wears away
the shelters that are iron and stone to grief,
is mine to heal, who recognize the prey
crouching behind the strength of my belief.

ONE NOT LOVED

You, being the heart's stranger,
to whom the full heart is not given,
being a sound
of music on an uncharted shore
where the heart listens no more,
being a dream, a cry, a vision
unpossessed, a smile unhallowed . . .
how shall you come to rest?

Lola Pergament

Shall you enter again the dark tower
of your learning, climb high
to a room stilled of ventures,
unmeeting your own eye? . . .
being above
tall heads and the wild sighs
that issue furtively with love.
Or shall you go deep into the ground
where death lies
in the drama of love's disguise,
pushing up the roots of desire?

O you may go anywhere . . . under the sea
where wet flowers spread, into the cloud
that is the loneliest shroud . . .
remembering your quest;
but whatever your search for the forgetful hour,
whatever your longing for lost memory,
you will harbor unrest.
You will come back to take the wound in your breast.

Lola Pergament

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THE POETRY OF UNREST

A REMARKABLE feature in the history of literature is the poetry that finds its chief — often its only — readers among poets, and remains unknown to the general public except in the form of imitations, redactions, or versions thinned out to suit popular taste. In English poetry the classic instance of such a poet is Spenser; in more recent times examples have appeared in Mallarmé, George, an Hopkins. Pound's *Cantos*, first published at prohibitive expense, circulated among poets and influenced their styles for over a decade before they were handed to a wider public, and of course a number of the more "difficult" talents of our time are still known only by hearsay or in the watered exercise of their understudies. Occasionally a single poem appears which, for various reasons, the author or his publisher carefully protects from the rough handling of general circulation and so condemns it to the kind of underground fame we associate with *Ulysses*, and sometimes this surreptitious celebrity enhances a vigor which impresses the creative thought of a decade more firmly than if the work in question enjoyed the full benefits of the open air. Such a poem is the *Anabase* of the French poet who calls himself St.-J. Perse. This remarkable work was written about a decade ago and was at once cited by some of its French readers — Valéry Larbaud, Lucien Fabre, Paul Valéry — as bearing the stamp and symbol of a major imaginative conception of modern times. As such Hugo von Hofmannsthal introduced it to

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German readers, and as such T. S. Eliot translated it in 1930 for English readers under the title *Anabasis*. But it appeared in a limited edition, and only now is it re-issued in London (by Faber & Faber) in an inexpensive popular format. The poem will never have many readers, but its delay in reaching us is unfortunate, particularly since an exceptional translation has existed for almost eight years, for here is obviously a case of a poet's seizing, in dramatic and salient form, one of those symbols of human history which immediately fix an age's ordeal and intuition, and thus come to dominate the creative imagination under many artistic forms.

The author is, we understand, a French diplomat and ethnologist by the name of St.-Léger Léger who was born in the Antilles and has become, after long service in the Orient and tropics, a recognized authority on those cultures. He has taken the name of Persia for his pseudonym. At least one earlier work, *Eloges*, had primitive life as its theme. In the *Anabasis* he wrote a poem of migrations. Here, as Mr. Eliot says, "the word *anabasis* has no particular reference to Xenophon or the journey of the Ten Thousand, no particular reference to Asia Minor" (though the scene has been surmised to be Syria), and he believes that "no map of its migrations could be drawn up. Mr. Perse is using the word *anabasis* in the same literal sense in which Xenophon himself used it. The poem is a series of images of migration, of conquest of vast spaces in Asiatic wastes, of destruction and foundation of cities and civilizations of any races or

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epochs of the ancient East." And according to a synopsis of action which Lucien Fabre has proposed, the poem depicts the arrival of a conqueror at the site of the city which he intends to build, the tracing of the city's plans, the consultation of augurs, the laying of foundations, the discontent of the conqueror and his straining toward further conquests, his schemes for these, his decision to journey onward, his march through a desert, his arrival at the threshold of a great new country, his acclamation and festivities, with, at the end, the rising of a fresh urge toward yet remoter adventures, this time under the inspiration of a navigator of the seas.

None of this is explicit in Perse's legend. In its subtly cadenced, richly orchestrated prose-poetry, he is concerned only with conveying the force and impulse behind such action, the sense of creative desire, of mysterious self-realization and fulfillment, which impels races to search, conquer, build, abandon, and move forward in their restless vision of power and security. The very genuine splendor of the poem exists in its combination of this abstract indefinable motive (its lyric source and the basis of its flights of psalmodic apostrophe) with the rich and earthy variety of its human material (that is, its epic references and structure). From first to last the *Anabasis* is kept from dissolving into febrile attenuation by this vivid imagism and sensory reality. The poem teems with hard and accurate visual records, and immediately becomes, in any observant reader's mind, an ineffaceable pattern of those symbols of racial sympathy, blood-brotherhood, and kinship with the earth which

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modern anthropologists, antiquarians, and poets have offered as clues to the unfathomable violences and agonies of our time. This interwoven imagery is only the first of the poem's artistic distinctions; others lie in its formal structure, so deviously arrived at through its union of epic with lyric means, and in the extraordinary mastery of a prose medium for poetic purposes which makes Perse one of the exceptional stylistic innovators among modern writers. But for a moment it is interesting to turn to the idea behind *Anabasis*, to its peculiar attraction for the poets of the past fifteen years, and to the special significance, for good or ill, which such a poem may claim in contemporary literature.

Its idea is not, of course, unfamiliar in other modern poets. It is best recognized in the work of Archibald MacLeish, upon whom, as has been apparent for almost a decade, the work of Perse has exerted an extreme and almost stultifying influence, seen especially in *New Found Land* and *Conquistador* but almost equally in his other books. Another recent version of Perse has appeared in Frederic Prokosch's *The Assassins*; one suspects others in various poems of Spender, MacNeice, and the younger English school, notably in Auden's records of his Iceland journey. But behind these lies a sizeable body of modern verse centering in ideas of racial and historic — or, allegorically, of spiritual — evolution: the *Cantos*, *The Waste Land*, *The Bridge*, the *Transsibérien* and *Paname* of Cendrars, Fargue's *Traces*, and André Salmon's *Prikaz* which, like Blok's *The Twelve*, conveys this idea under the symbol of the Russian revolution:

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poems which all lean heavily toward the acrostics and macaronics of history to which no key is available other than that of the primal and sub-rational impulses of the most fundamental humanity; poems which are composed out of folklore and archaeology, from books by Frazer and Lévy-Bruhl and Spengler and Hegelian philosophers, and often from far less systematic records and documents of the past and present, and which have thus already conferred their stamp of grandiose and spectacular symbolism on the work of many younger American poets of prophetic and proletarian tendencies. "Un grand principe de violence commandait à nos moeurs," says the *Anabasis*: A great principle of violence dictated our fashions. And it is obviously the violence and destructive anarchy in the moral, political, and social orders of the present century that has dictated this taste for a poetry of apocalyptic agony and unrest, for epics of homelessness and anonymity, for these revulsions from principles of order which, by overreaching themselves through some perversion of exaggerated or tyrannical logic, have brought upon themselves their own destruction.

Such poetry is symptomatic of much more than an immense moral and humanitarian upheaval in modern life; it has the esthetic significance of a reaction against those more exact disciplines of imagination and thought which have dictated the more severely formal structures in poets closer to the classic tradition. It is a poetry of long reach and panoramic dimensions, of prophetic aims and ambitions which are easily the surest source of confusion to a lyric talent; and it is usu-

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ally a poetry that uses its enormous signs and portents as a disguise for a poverty in real observation, in personal discipline, and in the accuracy of feeling, epithet, and cadence that generally provides the best evidence of a valid equipment for poetry. It is, in fact, a poetry that takes its part in that general retreat from fact and responsibility which has included so much of the fiction, popular philosophy, and anti-cultural emotion of our time. It is a poetry that needs the art of Perse or Eliot to ensure its integrity in qualities that lie below art, and to redeem it from the irresponsibility which is justly associated with the prophet's role in modern life. Its virtue, of course, lies in what it has done to prompt modern poets to serious thinking about the condition and outcome of their social and moral circumstances, and thus toward serious poetic ambitions that are vastly superior to the facile lyric inconsequence of most contemporary talents. But there is also a more offensive and a more deluding kind of triviality: the kind that comes from writing in enormous outlines that are supported by neither the structures of rigorous thought nor the details of an exact scrutiny of experience; the kind that discharges a haze of Utopian visions or a Promethean rhetoric of moral scorn and contempt; the sort that causes a poet to desert the specific business of his craft and conscience in exchange for the pretensions of reform, warning, or some favored brand of moral and political evangelism. This is the danger that at present threatens a good many rising poetic talents, as it is the weakness that has already enfeebled many of their elders. It forms the

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modern version of that struggle between prophecy and poetry which has come to so many crises in the past, and now provides one of the chief sources of confusion to the poets and critics of the immediate moment.

It is the kind of poetry which such a work as Perse's *Anabasis* too readily inspires, but it would be wrong to leave the impression that this poem offers nothing but a deluding ambition to its readers. It offers imagery, craft, and formal beauty of a very high order, all realized with great sensitiveness in Mr. Eliot's translation; and by conferring these qualities upon its theme it becomes what the future will doubtless recognize it as being: a classic version of a focal symbol in the imaginative literature of our time.

M. D. Z.

REVIEWS

TENTATIVE PROPOSAL

The Mediterranean, and Other Poems, by Allen Tate.
Alcestis Press.

Reactionary Essays on Poetry and Ideas, by Allen Tate.
Chas. Scribner's Sons.

It has never been hard for me to understand why, in the face of too much talk about "progress," one should say: "In that case, call me a reactionary." Or why over-zealous faith in scientific panaceas might make one even prefer to see a world go hang rather than see it happy by such dismal

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tests (observing, first, that the excess of zeal is fantastic in its credulousness; and second, not wanting comfort on such a plane even if it were obtainable). If, furthermore, one is a poet, and deeply so, as Mr. Tate is—and if one, with the scrupulosity of poets, has formed his expression around the coördinates of death, seeing everything, as it were, as a projection, or attenuation, of the mood one might feel when delivering, or hearing, a funeral oration—one will presumably have invested too thoroughly in an art that is *at home* with death for him to feel our current hygienic cant as other than a threat to his very character. That, too, I can understand. Or, on seeing what has been done with *ambition* in recent centuries, I can understand why one might want to speculate again on the sounder insight of *humility*.

But I can less well understand why such an earnest and discerning man would permit himself to "freeze" on these issues, to freeze too soon, thereby being forced to uphold tendencies that he need not uphold. I should cite Thomas Mann, who is as thorough as any contemporary writer, who sees how much more complex the problems of human relationship are than the coördinates of naïve materialistic science make them out to be, and who can pay tribute to the powers of darkness while warning against the powers of darkness.

Mr. Tate disturbs me. For he is exceptionally penetrating, both as critic and poet. To read his book of poems and his book of essays together, as I have just done, is to be stirred.

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In my disturbance, I began looking for a quick solution. I began looking for some rule of thumb, as writers of reviews must, something handy, that might serve here as a point of departure. There is, of course, the ready availability of matters to do with "class." There is the "cue" derivable from the statement: "The Negro, who has long been described as a responsibility, got everything from the white man." One may stickle at the vandalism of that. But I am going to risk an even blunter formula, that could be associated with it, but might apply as well to men of much different views.

What I feel the lack of, throughout both essays and poems, is *physicality*. How much of a poet's "soul," I have often dared ask myself, stems from the simple fact that he doesn't *do* enough, in the purely muscular sense of doing? While voicing great resentment of abstractions, Mr. Tate suggests something of the abstract and managerial in his notions of social and poetic purpose. There are those who lift and carry; there are those who oversee those who lift and carry; and there are those who, insofar as the processes of overseeing and being overseen are in order, may stand somewhat aside from both. Mr. Tate, as we clerics have ever been, seems sometimes the super-overseer and sometimes the forgetter, but too little of the physical mover.

Ethically, the cleavage tends toward a breach of this sort: Concepts of humility do not attain their counterpart in menial acts. They become truncated, somewhat of a soul without a body (as colonies or monastic orders were not).

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They become insignia. And the abstract is inevitable, since it is not grounded; it yearns for immediacy, without paying enough attention to the entrance into immediacy, which is through the body (i. e. "mimetic"). Do we not all tend to become too "efficient" in our function as "clerics" (a tendency permitted to some in every age, but often even drastically required of us today)? No purely contemplated South, I believe, no sanctioned and cherished ancestry, no refurbished feudalism however humane, even no "progressive" solution, can be the antidote to such abstraction. Our social drama must be reconstructed on the basis of the body as an actor. It is because of such beliefs that I call his statement about the Negro "vandalism" (vandalism is that which robs everyone).

From this rough-and-ready formulation, many attendant reservations might be deduced. Does not its violation account in great part for the forbidding rigor of his verse, its preference for granite rather than for liteness? The results are sometimes deeply impressive. His metaphysical *Shadow and Shade* is a poem that I shall return to often, both for what it says, and for what it gives inklings of, beyond the saying. And repeatedly, I find his remarks on other writers astounding in their incisiveness and imaginativeness. Yet, in both his critical perception and his poetic expression, I feel no preparatory cult and practice of doing. In politics, we get at most the vestiges of the managerial genius in such statesmen as Calhoun. In poetry with religious hankерings, we get austere purgatorial moods (forgetful that, what-

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ever this world is, it is not wholly the disembodied state of purgatory).

His poetry, I should say, marks the reward of such selectivity. His technical criticism is its conceptual parallel in worth. And his social exhortations are its corresponding deficiency. They make him say "Faugh!" where he might have said "I'm sorry." They make him say "Turn back" where he might have said "Let's try to go on, and come out on the other side."

Kenneth Burke

THE TONE OF TIME

Poems, 1909-1936, by John Hall Wheelock. Chas. Scribner's Sons.

I know of no poetry which could more appropriately illustrate certain moot points of esthetic theory than the verse of John Hall Wheelock, now assembled under one cover, so that the whole output lies before one like the detail of long sequence in a Chinese water-color.

I have heard Mr. Wheelock called "dated," in a description intended to place him accurately in some pre-War decade, or, perhaps, in the nineteen-twenties, where disparagers of lyricism could safely leave him. In my own philosophy this "dating" of creative artists is a superficial aspect of definition; it is relevant to a location of the man in the time sequence of literal history, but not of first importance in the attempt to dispose his work in the appropriate esthetic category. What "dates" a man is obvious, and bears but little on a discussion of even the simplest pro-

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fundity, since the measure of the profound is in the terms of values time cannot successfully attack. Inevitably, persons whose esthetic standards are made and remade by exigencies of the practical present, which will provide the material of future history, deny to verses like Mr. Wheelock's any value at all. Where the material of art is regarded as the one salient significance pertinent to an assessment of the art work, and where the material itself, to be acceptable, must demonstrate the artist's preoccupation with current social hopes and plans, the standard of the critic will not cause him to search works of art for qualities which may outreach time, for he will be satisfied, in his critical conscience, by a topical judgment. Actually, this attitude has confused its exponents, who incline to assume, in one breath, that poems with a contemporaneous reference owe some of the heightened value attributed to them to a finality in present "truth"; whereas, on identical grounds, the traditional can be dismissed — because, if you please, the evaluation of art cannot rest on the admission of standards good forever.

I believe people who argue art-with-a-social-message too often fail to distinguish between traditionalism, exemplified in Mr. Wheelock at his best, and the dead use of a familiar vocabulary, found in Mr. Wheelock at his worst. In this, the carping modern resembles the critic of another period, who gave the palm for achievement to any third-rate Dadaist of forced originality, in preference to bestowing it on a man still able to make vital use of familiar ideas. Art as a function more than propagandist is as little apprehended

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today as when words were treasured as ornament, rather than for their evocativeness.

Mr. Wheelock is a romantic; that his romanticism has contented itself within convention delimits, in his art, a power proceeding from romanticism, which, at its fullest flowering, usually compels some gesture of rebellion. Yet he is often inspired by such authentic recognitions of moods of nature that he performs what is (in the view of nonconformists, pretending to despise the pathetic fallacy) what is nearly a miracle, in resuscitating, with vivid feeling, a vocabulary traceable in large part to library sources. His eclecticism is enormously wide; but if ghosts as dissimilar as Wordsworth, Matthew Arnold, Tennyson, Blake, and even Sydney Lanier, sometimes rise from his pages, they are conjured before us by the magic of a genuine intuition; and their intrusion cannot dissipate the conviction we have of witnessing the impact, upon a man of sensibility and surcharged feeling, of a world physically real. Mr. Wheelock conveys with the poignance of unreserved sincerity, though without much mental examining, stages in a progression from the early period of erotic awakening, when

. . . a glorious
Torrent of surging life, let loose uproarious
Down channels long denied,
A sheer, clean sweep of loveliness . . .

to a conclusive patterning of thought in terms of nostalgic resignation.

We are sighing for you, far land,
We are praying for you, far land,
All our lives long—

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His most marked virtues are due to his amazing instinct for representing moods with appropriate cadences; and to capacities which have prolonged through years those excitements in physical living, that élan from tragedies, which, in most of us, escape after youth. As for enduring content—Sandburg, for instance, was probably being admired as an iconoclast at a time when Wheelock was reproached for his conservatism. It probably occurs to few to compare Wheelock's city poems with those of E. E. Cummings, who has, indisputably, such a freshly aristocratic selectiveness with words. And of course one goes beyond bounds in bracketing whatever "socially conscious" poet with any lyric-romanticist at all. Yet Robert Frost and Wordsworth may have more in common than was supposed when Frost was held an advance-guard for his own generation. *Evelyn Scott*

LEARNED IN VIOLENCE

Time in the Rock: Preludes to Definition, by Conrad Aiken.
Chas. Scribner's Sons.

Conrad Aiken is not the kind of poet whom our younger school inclines to admire or imitate. His has been a stubborn and, in many ways, heroic journey inward, following the Freudian stream. The political and social forces of our time have failed to touch him at his creative centers, though I do not doubt his intellectual awareness of them. What needs to be kept in mind is that the seemingly inexhaustible fertility of his imagination would seem to indicate that the course he has chosen may be, for him, the proper course.

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We must not judge a poet by the poetry he does not write.

Aiken's book is subtitled *Preludes to Definition*, but we do not have to wait for his world to be defined: that definition is implicit in every line he writes. His vision is of the shadows in the cave, and the cave itself impalpable as fog; of the swirling of phantoms, the dance of atoms, the blind gusts of desire. "God is your fancy," he writes, "and you are his." What holds the dissolving cloud-rack together is memory, the persistence of mind. Aiken insists that continual resurrection is the condition of life. Man, hero and scapegoat of a thousand deaths, must not forget what he was, lest he fail to continue to be.

The purpose, meaning, form — even the technique — of Aiken's poems become clarified for us only as we perceive them in their true function, as mnemonic exercises. We cannot understand this desperate clutching at dead roots, stumps, images, syllables, stones, unless we recognize the terror of the ego hanging over the abyss of disaster and oblivion, the brink of the unconscious. These preludes are feasts of remembering, efforts "to have back"

even that simple evening, that simple flight,
the cloud advancing on the wall of night,
the rain advancing on the wall of wind,
the mind advancing on the world of sight.

Note particularly the supreme idiosyncrasy of Aiken's later work, the repetitions, the catches. These mnemonic devices tend to resist the authority of the creative will; they lead to the tedious abracadabra of automatic writing, such ritualistic pig-Latin as

Learned in Violence

And in the wide world full of sounds and nothings
of faces and no faces and no sounds
of words and wounds and in the words no world
but only you whose face we cannot fathom
and you whose word is what a word is only.

Language itself is a perpetual miracle to Aiken: "each single syllable is ringed with heaven and hell." There is an Indian sect that holds all manifestations of life, even maggots and lice, sacred; Aiken's religion of the Word, his fear of mutilating free verbal associations, is responsible for many of his failures. His best poems in this book are those of controlled word-play in which he holds fast to a dominating image or concept. Number *XXXVII*, with its astonishing "flight of bones"; *LXXV* and *LXXXV*, brutal in self-exposure; *XII*, the crickets' song, a tender fancy; and *XX*, the grave address to "you who love"—these so dexterous, so evocative, so beautifully fluent, are the ripe expressions of an undefeated lyric passion.

Aiken's loss of prestige in recent years is explicable in the light of his complete subjectivity, verging on the madness of solipsism; his prolificness; and the not infrequently absurd excesses of his style. But he has written:

O patience, let us be patient and discern
in this lost leaf all that can be discerned;
and let us learn, from this sad violence learn,
all that in midst of violence can be learned.

And he has written:

Lie down: we are absolved we go from here
to wider emptiness, and such dispersals
of death, and cruelty, and the death of pain,
as no life knew before, or will know after.

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A poet who can achieve time and again such solemn music
transcends his defects and limitations. He does not need to
worry about being in fashion. *Stanley J. Kunitz*

PROTEST AND HOPE

Calling Western Union, by Genevieve Taggard. Harper
& Brothers.

In *Calling Western Union* Miss Taggard has abandoned introspective and metaphysical appurtenances to appear as a champion of the proletariat, Karl Marx, and the classless society of the future. This change of attitude — heartening in itself and testimony to her personal integrity and seriousness of purpose — Miss Taggard has not, as a poet, been able to put to advantage. Her latest work suffers from the pitfalls and shortcomings that vitiate so much current left-wing verse — the general ineptness of which was clearly revealed in an issue of the *New Masses* some months back where there appeared on the same page with efforts by several revolutionary poets, including Miss Taggard, a translation of Rimbaud's *Democratie*. In speed, vigor, insight, and perfect fusion of form and content Rimbaud's few lines reduced the other verses to insignificance and at the same time demonstrated that the expression of a political conviction can be great poetry. Now I do not wish to be so unfair to Miss Taggard as to compare her to Rimbaud; neither she nor any other living poet will bear the comparison. But Rimbaud's poems on social-political themes remain, to date, unrivaled and for that reason they provide

Protest and Hope

a corrective to the faulty methods and approach now in general use.

Miss Taggard has accepted the methods and the approach without hesitation, and they have been her undoing. The approach — which has *not* been imposed by the Marxian dialectic, being in fact contrary to both Marx's and Lenin's idea of the function of art — sets up a dichotomy, long ago discredited, between art and life, form and substance, and by restricting the poet to an over-simplified, almost mechanical, way of apprehending experience, it prevents him from doing justice not only to his medium and his sensibility but to the "message" he wants to convey. What happens in practice is that the poets who have adopted this approach all sound alike. Miss Taggard is no exception. She writes to the familiar formula and uses the familiar unsuccessful devices. Witness the hackneyed, hail-to-the-future ending of *To My Daughter, 1936*:

A different insurance, darling. One safety, one hope, my resolve:
Your face lifted with a million others, laughing, under red banners.
When she passes from the rhetorical to the concrete the images she selects are as worn and obvious as the emotion they embellish:

O people misshapen, hugging bones in old coats,
Waivering as you walk, hurrying on mean streets and stairs,
Poor eaters, with bodies the clinics hastily patch
And push out into dark, dirt, roar and lack again . . .

This is Miss Taggard at her best. At her most ambitious, as in the following lines, she makes the very serious error of presenting the solution of a problem without first presenting the problem itself:

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Sober and grim — substantial fare,
This hope, our food.
Dreams are suspect.
No longer brood,
Poor dreamer, slave of mood!
This is our great refrain:
OUR HOPE'S NOT VAIN.

Faced with the psychological and esthetic incompetence of such a passage, one had best be equally dogmatic and say that in Miss Taggard's case, although her hope may not be vain the labors of Messrs. Eliot, Pound, Richards, Valéry, et al., certainly have been.

T. C. Wilson

GREEK INTO ENGLISH

The Alcestis of Euripides, An English Version, by Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald. Harcourt, Brace & Co.

For this rendering the translators have gone to work in conformity with the taste of the present generation and with their own special talent, which is for writing English verse that is at once dignified, plain, and moving. Divining that the dominant mood of Euripides in this play is one of simplicity, they have kept him to his own standard by either avoiding or suppressing all that is luxuriant or sentimental. Thus untranslatable Greek noises are ignored; Eumelos is allowed to appear, not to speak; the maid's account of Alcestis' farewell to her house and household is simplified by omitting the second storm of tears in the bedroom. The result of all this is not, of course, a strict translation "in the classroom sense" (or in any other sense) and the trans-

Greek into English

lators disarm the critic by announcing that it was not meant to be. As a piece of translation, even where the original is closely followed, we find no particular brilliance in wringing all the delicate meaning out of the Greek. What we do get is a beautiful poetic drama in English, which, so far as we can tell, preserves the essential tone and intention of Euripides. Perhaps that was all the translators wanted, and certainly it is a great deal.

I spoke of cuts. From the dramatic point of view, these are justified by the results. For instance, 302-310 of the text may be more or less literally translated:

You love these children as much as I; *at least, if you are a decent father you do.* Let them stay masters in *my* house, do not give them a stepmother, *who would be bad compared with me* and would beat them. You know how a new wife is toward her stepchildren — *s spiteful as a viper!*

Partly by deleting what I have italicized, the translators get

You love these children
As well as I do. Make them the masters here:
Do not marry again, do not set a woman above them:
Whoever she might be, sometimes she'd strike them —
And they are our children!

I beg you to promise me this.
A second wife is hateful to the children of the first
to the immense improvement of Alcestis' character.

It is a pity that when they make most of their innovations in such faultless taste, the translators should intrude a few such stage-directions as

(Admetus takes a certain pleasure in making poetry. He makes some now.)

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This helps nobody. Admetus himself tells us what he is.

One thing more. In the Greek there is a sharp metrical distinction between the declaimed passages and the lyrics. Here they are, for cadence and tone, practically indistinguishable.

O Goddess, Stranger,
Be never more cruel than you have been this day:
Though all that God wills you must bring to pass,
And though your hand, were it shown, would crumple steel.

This is splendid; but only *Antistrophe I* printed at the margin indicates that it stands for a lyric, not, as the lines quoted above do, for iambic trimeter. Anyone who has shown such control of versification could easily do more to preserve a contrast which, because it is protective against monotony, is worth preserving. *Richmond Lattimore*

TRANCE AND MONODRAMA

Landscape With Figures, by Lionel Wiggam. Viking Press.
Stranger's Garment, by Gilbert Maxwell. Dodd, Mead.

Both Mr. Wiggam and Mr. Maxwell are, after a fashion, carrying forward private monodramas which are more in the nature of comments upon experience than enactments of it. Mr. Wiggam, viewing childhood solitude from a distance, evolves the more stationary drama of the two. His title is indicative: his is a "country of repeated patterns" in blunt contours and simple, pictorial lines, a "landscape with figures" "frozen in sharp hiatus" like a painted backdrop, before which he passes in a pantomime both leisurely and literary.

Trance and Monodrama

The limitations imposed by such an approach are not unguessed by Mr. Wiggam, who at one point concedes cheerfully enough that he can in no wise "build a tower from which to see what passions are," or "fix and name the course his own heart takes." Such, at all events, is the charge that must be brought against the section entitled *Heart-shaped Leaf*, concerned with women in love and submitting a running comment that pleases less by its clinical disingenuousness than by a mood of youthful magnanimity of which the poet himself is, apparently, completely unaware:

Only her lover silences that panic,
Only his touch, his smile, subdue the grief.
Running to meet him, she is a child who whispers—
"Look! I have brought you a curious heart-shaped leaf."

In general the verse is graceful and musical, with an effect of spontaneity that is, by turns, the first source of its inventiveness, as in Poem III, Section I, and of its indebtedness, as in the lyrics which make flying use of Louise Bogan's hound in snow, "pentagonal" flowers, and wilderness-stricken women. A more considerable debt — to the author of *Boy in the Wind* and *The Flowering Stone* — is not to be reckoned by a single adjective, or even by a tabulation of borrowed fragilities such as "blow waters," cockleshells, ferns, "papery" hornet-nests, and "heart-shaped" mulberry leaves. Whole poems have been transcribed in effect if not in fact (witness Poem I, Section I, and Dillon's *Memory of Lake Superior*) by a process of replacing one set of details with another, in an identical context. Mr. Wiggam has further carried over from Dillon his fundamental conception

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of adolescent experience as a "strange entrancement," "delirium," "wild dream," reducing it to a tableau of "a boy who dreamed, His head upon his arms in flowery turf," instead of, like Dillon, employing the mythic to project a sense of the world's "strangeness." The jacket carries a comment by Winifred Welles expressing the hope that the poet will "continue for a long time in the same trance where he is 'standing and staring' with such a loving eye." The "trance," however, is already at an end; for all its charm, properly so. Mr. Wiggam must be prepared to determine now what of value will be left him when "the violins are stopped," as in his lyric *Music*, and "the people rise and disenchant themselves with their own cries."

Gilbert Maxwell in *Stranger's Garment* seems to be carrying forward precisely the monodrama of disenchantment ("The world is in no wise lovely now, nor kind") that awaits Lionel Wiggam. Maxwell's is a "static grief" and a "slow sorrow," and as such is not yet wholly divorced from trance. He is curiously complacent, moreover, in his choice of symbols like the titular "stranger's garment" wherein life is likened to the traditional "fabric, mended and return" that is "yet too fine for loathing." Yet the poet's responses are less non-committal than his symbols would seem to indicate. His *I Speak For the Young, To A Poet in Proud Shoes* (an indictment of Paul Engle as-of-1934), and the various autobiographical pieces carry the bite and specific validity of experiences concrete enough to be named by their names and appraised according to the mood

Trance and Monodrama

of the poet. Unfortunately this mood is more often than not deflected into generalities by the essential "stillness" and "select desire for solitude" in which the monodrama unfolds. Poems like that which begin:

Wearied of all evading and replying;
Weighted with knowledge longed for and ill known,
The treacherous breath, the tongue forsown to lying
I have come home, content to be alone —

exchange the context of experience for one of private play-acting and have their consequences both in poor writing and in a devaluation of conviction as a whole. Mr. Maxwell's obvious adulation for Edna Millay is also a questionable indulgence and is not likely to help him achieve the resiliency of which he stands in need.

Ben Belitt

LYRIC REALITY

The Human Abstract, by Alice Very. Bruce Humphries.

There is a whole school of poetry, the Lyric School, the First Person Singular school, the "I" school, whose portent and purpose is to say and to say over: "I, unlike (or so like) you, know Beauty and take my Beauty every day. Life hurts me; Beauty hurts me. Ah, therefore, pity me."

The perpetrators of this indecency would mark themselves off from the deadly average individual, the monotonous citizenry of Philistia, but they strike only a poor, maybe a poorer, vitality and sense. Consequently they, more than any outside influence, are responsible for the low esteem into which the profession of poetry has fallen in this country. We have here a larger possible audience than anywhere on earth,

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but it is held down and made sickly by the stony weight of the academy which equates and identifies the "I" school, this Lyric School, with Poetry itself—pure Poetry. No wonder that the love of poetry is taken popularly as a duty, with all the insincerity of that mode of taking things.

Alice Very has grown under this stony weight of rubbish. The body of her work conforms to it, but shoots and tendrils get out from under. Her metrics are not in the grand manner of stress and accent which is the nature and the glory of our tongue. Her rhymes are threadbare. But yet her verses go along with unfaltering conviction. She writes because she has matters on her mind. While this does not add to the sum of human wisdom, neither does it add to, nay it subtracts somewhat from, the sum of human idiocy. In her use of "I" she is reaching out into that use for it which makes it into a "we."

Child and Father shows her limited craft and her clear intent to say her mind: "Your little red mouth, / A small wet flower pressed to my cheek, / Delicately laps it / As though I were something to eat./ . . . Yet your little arms cling to me / With the grasp of a man / Who takes his beloved—" This is an authentic woman's view of life; this is Alice Very doing her job.

More tendrils, more shoots, further from the stone of moral and esthetic superstition. More courage to look out upon the subject all around and with us all. A closer apprehension of the meanings, the contemporary equivalents (which are often the superficial opposites) of the obsessions

Lyric Reality

and autonomous commands which took hold of her ancestor Jones Very, Emerson's friend, and of her spiritual ancestor, Emerson's prototype, Blake.

John Wheelwright

CORRESPONDENCE

Our readers will remember a *Letter from England*, in POETRY last November, from Geoffrey Grigson, the editor of *New Verse*, the London journal of poetry. To this, in our January *English Number*, William Empson offered a rejoinder. We have now received from Mr. Grigson the following response, to which Mr. Empson gives his reply. With these documents POETRY must conclude the present controversy, but refers its readers to such English magazines as *New Verse*, *Scrutiny*, and *Contemporary Poetry and Prose*, where the combat proceeds unhindered.

To the Editor of POETRY.

You observe: say one word about writers in England, stick in one millimetre of pin, and out come petulance and squeal, for that is all that Mr. Empson's letter is made of. "The trick of being rude to everybody . . . paying journalism of a certain kind . . . a good journalistic nose for what he can safely be rude to . . . a comfortable job as critic by nose and noise alone . . ." — very neat, very delicate, but wouldn't Mister Empson have used your space a little more sensibly, in replying to my *Letter from England*? Is there or is there not, a remarkable inertia masquerading in England as activity? Do English writers, or do they not, form defensive fronts of the fifth-rate? Do David Gascoyne and Dylan Thomas and F. R. Leavis and Michael Roberts, and Herbert Read, and Day Lewis, *et al.*, deserve, or do they not deserve, the things I said about them? Mr. Empson, ranging himself with the Sitwells as an *English gentleman*, might have stood up for his friends, if he had had anything to write beyond innuendoes and exaggerations about *New Verse*. For must the reason for in-

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sult always be stated? Can it never be obvious? And does not "nose" contradict "everybody"? Mr. Empson is right; I am not rude (if he must have the word) from "any theoretical basis." I attempt to be rude—a typically inert theorizer and poetical *pasticheur* of Mr. Empson's kind would scarcely see it—I say, I attempt to be rude from a moral basis, a basis of differentiating between the fraudulent and inert and the active, genuine, and desirable. The inert verbalism in which Mr. Empson deals may not be fraudulent, but it has always, if Mr. Empson would care to know, struck me as quarter-man stuff so unreadably trivial that it is not worth insulting or attacking.

Geoffrey Grigson

To the Editor of POETRY:

The important thing here seems to be the anti-intellectual stuff. I wouldn't want to deny that it lets Grigson put up a case; in fact, that is the danger of it, that it will defend anything. For instance, it is a bad thing to be a quarter-man, but it is a great sign of being a quarter-man if you strut about squaring your shoulders and seeing how rude you can be. And it is necessary to make your final judgments "on a moral basis," but if you haven't done some thinking *first*, your moral intuitions will as like as not be mistaken and harmful. If you set out to forget simple truths like these it gets easy to be proud of yourself for being manly and moral.

The anti-intellectual line can be a useful defense for valuable things; a man like D. H. Lawrence had a right to it. But as to whether the fifth-rate (not that I agree about who is fifth-rate) form defensive fronts—they do, they do; and this is one of their fronts.

William Empson

COMMENT

The Cuala Press, 133 Lower Baggot St., Dublin, announces a new book by William Butler Yeats in the usual advanced limited edition of 300 copies. This is *Essays 1931-1936*, for which orders at twelve shillings and sixpence may be sent directly to the Press, of which the poet's sister, Elizabeth Corbet Yeats, is the director.

T. S. Eliot has written an introduction to Djuna Barnes' remarkable novel, *Nightwood*, in its American edition, which has recently been issued by Harcourt, Brace & Co. He speaks of this

Comment

as his third "impertinence" in the way of prefacing a work of the "creative order," his earlier being probably his forewords to the selected poems of Ezra Pound and Marianne Moore.

Archibald MacLeish, believing that radio is the ideal medium for poetic drama, has written his first verse-play for the air. It is called *The Fall of the City* and will be published by Farrar & Rinehart this spring; arrangements for its first broadcast performance were made for April 11th. It is to be hoped that Mr. MacLeish's example will promote the cause of good poetry on the radio, the average there being still, in spite of A. M. Sullivan's intelligent programs broadcast from New York during the past several years, of an abysmally stupid and tasteless order.

W. W. Norton & Co. announce the semi-annual publication of a new anthology of "unpublished verse and prose revealing the character of the present decade, its consciousness of the society in which it lives and its awareness of new, but not necessarily experimental, forms of writing." This will be called *New Letters in America*, and will be edited by Horace Gregory. The first volume will appear in September, 1937, the second in May, 1938. The editor will welcome submissions (at 70 Fifth Ave., New York) by May 1, 1937; they may be of short pieces of prose, chapters from novels, groups of poems, one-act plays, and reportorial sketches.

A new edition of the *Poetical Works of Walter Savage Landor* is announced by the Oxford University Press in its series of Oxford English Texts. This has appeared in three volumes as prepared by Stephen Wheeler for the limited edition published some years ago in England by Chapman & Hall. All of Landor's known poems are given in final and variant forms, with full textual commentary by the editor.

The Jones Library of Amherst, Mass., has issued *Robert Frost — A Bibliography*, compiled by W. B. Shubrick Clymer and Charles R. Green, with a foreword by David Lambuth. This volume, published in two limited editions, one at \$7.50 and the other at \$3.25, covers all book and periodical publications of Frost's verse and prose, as well as the known writings about him.

A Bibliography of Edwin Arlington Robinson, by Charles Beecher Hogan, has appeared from the Yale Press. This includes Robinson's 30 books between 1896 and 1935, as well as a full collation of his poems as they appeared in other books, periodicals, pamphlets, and reprints. There are also 46 pages listing books and articles about the poet.

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In March there was opened at the library of Yale University an exhibit of the English and American first editions of T. S. Eliot. For this apparently complete collection an excellent bibliographical catalogue was prepared by Donald C. Gallup, containing, in addition to 117 entries of books, a valuable list of Eliot's poems and essays in periodicals. Mr. Eliot has himself credited his "first appearance as a poet" (at least with his mature work) to POETRY, which printed his *Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* in June, 1916.

The modern poetic translation of Greek drama goes forward rapidly. Following Dudley Fitts' and Robert Fitzgerald's translation of Euripides' *Alcestis* (reviewed in this issue), Harcourt, Brace & Co. now issues Louis MacNeice's of the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus. In London Chatto & Windus has just published H. D.'s rendering of the *Ion* of Euripides; and Hugh Owen Meredith has published his verse translations of four of Euripides' other plays, *Hecuba*, *Heracles*, *Andromache*, and *Orestes* (Allen & Unwin).

C. Collier Abbott, who is editing the *Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins, including his Correspondence with Coventry Patmore*, for the Oxford University Press, asks assistance in locating more of those letters, particularly one written to Patmore from Dublin on November 7, 1886. It is included in the *Catalogue of the Library of Coventry Patmore*, issued by Everard Meynell, the Serendipity Shop, 1921, but is absent from the catalogue of Everard Meynell's collection of books and documents offered for sale after his death by Messrs. J. and E. Bumpus of London, though the other letters from Hopkins to Patmore are to be found there. Presumably it has been sold, but Mr. Abbott has been unable to trace the pur-chaser. If the owner would allow him to copy and print it, Mr. Abbott would be very grateful. His address is The Castle, Uni-versity College, Durham, England.

Mr. Wallace Stevens, of Hartford, Conn., is the author of *Har-monium* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1923; new edition, 1931), *Ideas of Order* (Alcestis Press, 1935; Knopf, 1936), and *Owl's Clover* (Al-cestis Press, 1936). He was one of POETRY's earliest contributors, his first appearance coming in November, 1914, and many of his best known poems—*Sunday Morning*, *Peter Parasol*, *Pecksniffiana*, etc.—in the following years. His *Six Travelers Watch a Sunrise* won POETRY's Play Prize in 1916 and in 1920 he was awarded the Levinson Prize. His latest contribution to these pages was *Like Decorations in a Nigger Cemetery* in February, 1935. Last autumn

Comment

he was awarded the *Nation's Poetry Prize*. His present contribution is from a sequence of poems "whose subject is the individuality of the poet in relation to the world about him, or, to say the same thing in another way, the balance between imagination and reality."

Miss Marian Storm, after many years as a writer of fiction, plays, and prose, now lives in Uruapan, Michoacan, Mexico. Her latest volume is *Prologue to Mexico* (1935).

Miss Lola Pergament was born in New York City, attended Washington University in St. Louis, and now lives in Atlanta, Ga.

Mr. James Still, born in the Chattahoochee Valley of Alabama, is now, after college at Vanderbilt and Illinois universities, the librarian of the Hindman Settlement School, Hindman, Kentucky. The Viking Press will soon issue his first book of verse, *Hounds on the Mountain*.

Marjorie Meeker (Mrs. Vivian Collins), of St. Augustine, Fla., is the author of *Color of Water* (Brentano's, 1928).

Mr. David Schubert, of Brooklyn, N. Y., was the leading poet of our April issue and last autumn received the Jeannette Sewell Davis Prize.

Doris Caldwell (Mrs. Joseph A. C.) lives in Ocean Beach, San Diego, Cal. Mrs. Madeleine Ruthen lives in Beverly Hills, Cal.

The other poets of this issue appear in POETRY for the first time:

Mr. Kenneth Allott lives in Oxford, England, and has contributed to *The Criterion*, *Contemporary Poetry and Prose*, and other English journals.

Mr. David McCaughey lives in Vancouver, British Columbia.

BOOKS RECEIVED

ORIGINAL VERSE:

- The Sleeping Fury*, by Louise Bogan. Chas. Scribner's Sons.
From Jordan's Delight, by R. P. Blackmur. Arrow Editions, N.Y.C.
Lawrence, The Last Crusade, by Selden Rodman. Viking Press.
Poems, Stéphane Mallarmé, trans. by Roger Fry. Oxford Univ. Press.
Love Sonnets and Other Poems, by M. Krishnamurti. Shakespeare Head Press, Oxford, Eng.
The Early World and Other Poems, by Robert Hunt. Villagra Book Shop, Santa Fe, N. M.
Road to America, by Frances Frost. Farrar & Rinehart.
Encounter in April, by May Sarton. Houghton Mifflin Co.

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- Songs from Shelley, A Collection of Lyrics and Sonnets Completed from the Minor Fragments of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, by Carl John Bostelmann. Lewis W. Biebigheiser, Morristown, N. J.
- More Than Water Broken*, by Constance Deming Lewis. Paear Co., N.Y.C.
- The Mad Lover and Other Poems*, by Edna Dummer Drake. Christopher Pub. Co., Boston.
- Five Men*, by Craddock Edmunds. Around the Corner Bookshop, Lynchburg, Va.
- Green Lions, Poems*, by Douglas Stewart. Whitcombe & Tombs. Auckland, New Zealand.
- Philosophy for Every Day*, by Clarence Dan Blachly. Priv. ptd., Takoma Park, Md.
- 8.20 A.M., A Book of Poems*, by Ruth Evelyn Henderson. Bruce Humphries.
- I Am the American Negro*, by Frank Marshall Davis. Black Cat Press, Chicago.
- Monticello and Other Poems*, by Lawrence Lee. Chas. Scribner's Sons.
- As from a Minaret*, by Evelyn M. Watson. Bruce Humphries.
- Chota Chants*, by William Hutcheson. Fraser, Edward & Co., Glasgow.
- Reverie*, by Roydon Burke. Bruce Humphries.
- Afterwhere*, by Angela Morgan. Poet's Press, N. Y. C.
- The Redbird Sings*, by Elizabeth Charles Welborn. Bruce Humphries.
- This Heatherland*, by John Gillespie. Priv. ptd., Glasgow, Scotland.
- Rom*, by Armand Godoy. Nachdichtung von Alfred Neumann. Im Saturn Verlag, Wien.

PROSE:

- The Notebooks and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. by Humphrey House. Oxford Univ. Press.
- The Letters of Fanny Browne to Fanny Keats, 1820-1824*, ed. with a Biographical Introduction by Fred Edgcumbe, Oxford U. P.
- Whitman*, by Edgar Lee Masters. Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Poetry in Prose*, by Walter De La Mare. Oxford Univ. Press.
- Workers in Fire*, by Margery Mansfield. Longmans Green & Co.
- The Great Poets and the Meaning of Life*, by Chas. A. Dinsmore Houghton Mifflin Co.
- Edgar Allan Poe*, by Edward Shanks. Macmillan Co.

POETRY: A MAGAZINE OF VERSE

calls the attention of its friends, subscribers, and contributors to the ways in which they may assist the magazine in achieving a new security, and in celebrating its coming **Twenty-fifth Anniversary** by planning on another quarter-century of literary distinction and discovery:

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OVER

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POETRY is now publishing its *Fiftieth Volume*, and in the autumn of this year will complete its *Twenty-fifth Year* of continuous publication. It has appeared regularly, every month, since its first issue in October 1912, and has been published over a longer space of time than any other journal of verse in the English language.

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— Ford Madox Ford

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Poetry

A Magazine of Verse

VOL. L
No. III

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REHEARSAL AGAINST TIME

*"I have seen Minute-glasses; Glasses
so short-liv'd."*

METEOROLOGY

PERCHED on the sliding roof he saw
What angry relatives would never see:
The bright red buildings, in the moving mist,
Of an academy set along a row of solemn
Faded hills.

He saw Corot, a savage gray-billed bird,
Transform the leafless trees to green,
And streak the clouds with black — he turned
His head and set the compass on his knee
To find the four directions of the wind.

Then the vane. He drilled the apex
Of the cupola, he drilled and drove
The spike, to fix four gilded letters

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In the clearing air and loose the sagittary sign
To storm, the pacing horse.

He watched a cat along the railroad tracks,
Until she disappeared in lengthy grass,
And crossed the stubble where a fire
With its red advance, had left
The tussocks black.

So much for this. So much he learned
Of space, but left the golden runner
On the ridge to make the weather and the wind
Until one day a tempest baffled him:
The arrow pointed east, the horse raced north.

HELIOS: PARHELION

Take your hands from the face:
She will never know
Why you graze the florid lips;
She will not understand.

After so many slipshod spasms
She is tricked to an end
By arrogant matchless flight
Of this screaming bird

As he swings in the spokes of the sun,
This fiery wheel,
The gilded disk turning the air
To light and tawny sky.

Samuel French Morse

She watches the gull come down
To the sloping sand; she knows
The long course through the tidal bay
From ocean inland;

Now she will put aside
The indices of hate.
She will see the arc of the wind
In bellowing trees

And the great sun, and stand
With the gold on her face,
The streaming yellow light,
She will trace the curvet of light

While the slow birds drift at the edge
Of the tides, she will turn
(She will never be still)
To the sullied pines and the landed dead,

To a mock sun of blood
And a clutter of dials in the smoke.
She will reckon her time
With a broken stone and parhelion —

Take your hands from the face:

She will not understand —

Loose your pack over Europe!
The sundogs howl! She will reckon

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Her time with a glass
Till a bullet scatters the sand —

She will not understand.

BEYOND MEDUSA

*"There are women worse than the Medusa,
who more or less follow her history; the woman
who committed sacrilege with Poseidon, and
who was punished for the crime, not only
for herself, but for the terrible children."*

She must return to the house where the worm
Scores his track in the beam, and the heavy sill
No longer cases the door from the stammering wind,
To her monstrous children whom she cannot kill,

Marked for her crime with our father in this room,
As they planned our treacherous birth in their lust,
While the hideous owl screamed from the barren tree,
And the cat set his speechless print in the thickening dust.

This was the reasoned sacrilege, paid for in full;
Vague, and ashamed of her power, she has grown old,
But she broods on her sons, and the host is imagined pure
children,
While the works of the clock are stopped by the seeping
cold ...

Let the sweater lie. She will come to pick it up,
Going like a bedlamite through the empty rooms,

Samuel French Morse

Gathering scraps and wool for a terrible fire
To quicken the blood — we are the ones she dooms

With her stare: gray eyes, but she lacks the fillet
Of snakes, and her wiry hair is pinned and bent
To follow the shape of the skull. She will pursue us
In time to the end of faith, when we have spent

Ourselves, and the anger has worn to a thread for the moth,
Like the yellow sweater snatched from the couch and flung
On her shoulders, the brilliant roses fading in her fist,
Petals dropped on the rugs and scattered among

The blowzy mohair trees. She will never forget
The other arrogant crime committed so long ago when she
turned
To face her lover home from the ships, when she tasted
His mouth with its brine, and the hate as she learned

To despise him, cooling like stone, freezing in front
Of her ; then as she soured his blood, she could stand no more,
And fixed her eyes to the mirror, caught by her own studied
skill,
Till the mercury flaked from the glass to the hardwood floor.

The roses he'd brought exploded with light through the room,
And the bottle crashed down from the shelf, but the house
grew still.

We are the children, immune to her schemes of fright,
Not flexed to the magic, trapped by the acrid will,

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Stifling with her in the landslide of scarlet roses,
The lengths of yarn, the stench of this moulderling place;
She has said the story so often it carries no fire
Flickering madly across the tortured face.

SIGNALS BEFORE STORM

for Alexander Giampietro

Here, at the lake, in summer's sudden convulsion,
the gasp as the season shudders and rolls into autumn,
the last surface-calm before the barometer drops,
I see the fish, like insane torpedoes, scudding over the bottom.

Then the rigid startled reflection, the image in the eyes
as I see my terror for winter, my fingers like animal claws,
the ice in my hair, the tangle of leaves among branches,
this is the scene, the epileptic pause.

Now, as the cliffs of light topple into the gulf and the wind
rises, screaming against the dark pine-needles, finding the bone
that is circled with flesh, with the knowledge of death like a
wound

at the temple, I am left with the touch of cold stone.

There, in the distance, the snow comes, to cover my face,
as I turn from the light and the light drops away;
the night comes on slowly, sweeping the storm before it,
and crosses the water, the curtain of snow hides the bay.

Samuel French Morse

THREE POEMS

CASSIOPOEIA AND THE POET

Tiar of dun night steeds, diamond-fretted,
Glinting thy tossing white fire flakes, flickering
Phosphorent rims of night tides: O bright-petalled
Florescence of star-flowers! In thy bickering

He watched his soul's constellar life begin
Among thy nebulous star-showers. Those five points,
Those chiefest luminaries whose hyaline
And jacinth-flashing crescents flame anoints,

Glowed not for him, nor in the nether lights
(The milder visionaries of duller beaming)
His glimmering orb appeared. Yet hope invites
The lustrous ascent, the comet streaming

High through the vocal night. Though herald blew
No loud event; no agèd prophet dreaming
Presaged the starry visitant anew,
With stray and lag approach of little seeming.

Yet mother! as thy shore-bound maid might yearn
A last relief from shackles of the rock;
Grant that celestial aspirant may burn
His steady light, and in thy shrine may lock.

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LOVE'S FEAR

On Beachy Head, in Sussex

Now the high winds are dying,
The loud halloo of the storm
Sped on, and the sea spray crying
Inland like some fey form

Flying a feared pursuit,
Seems but a singing echo . . .
Hark to the cliff's low bruit
Of the sea swell far below!

O my love, 'tis now the rising
And falling heart must tell
Its sudden sad surmising —
How the years as some sea swell

That spills on the midmost ocean
Shall furrow the future's shore,
Where lips have lost their motion
And you and I no more

Are lovers each to the other
Who loved surpassing dear,
And blood burns in another —
O love, this hour I fear.

Philip Parker

IN THE BODLEIAN LIBRARY

Oxford

A whisper comes to men and speaks of things
Hidden within a world where only thoughts
Are masters, and that gentle whisper brings
Desire to write its message: it imports
The little more, the life unlived, the ken
Beyond the compass of a day and night,
Although it bodies from the minds of men
As warmth might waver from a hidden light.

That voice has stirred in every age, and here
Are gathered all its messages, which told
To many a suppliant and votive ear,
Eagerly caught, were pondered and enrolled.
Rank upon rank the quiet work now lies,
For here are many whispers — and some sighs.

Philip Parker

THE WATCHERS

WE IN THE FIELDS

Dawn and a high film, the sun burned it,
But noon had a thick sheet, and the clouds coming,
The low rain-bringers, trooping in from the north,
From the far cold fog-breeding seas, the womb of the storms.
Dusk brought a wind and the sky opened ;
All down the west the broken strips lay snared in the light,
Bellied and humped and heaped on the hills.
The set sun threw the blaze up,
The sky lived redly, banner on banner of far-burning flame,
From south to the north, the furnace-door wide and the
smoke rolling.

We in the fields, the watchers from the burnt slope,
Facing the west, facing the bright sky,
Hopelessly longing to know the red beauty.
But the unable eyes, the too-small intelligence,
The insufficient organs of reception not a thousandth part
enough to take and retain.

We stared, and no speaking, and felt the deep loneliness of
incomprehension —

The flesh must turn cloud, the spirit, air,
The transformation to sky and the burning,
Absolute oneness with the west and the down sun.
But we, being earth-stuck, watched from the fields
Till the rising rim shut out the light,

William Everson

Till the sky changed, the long wounds healed,
Till the rain fell.

DUST AND THE GLORY

On a low Lorrainian knoll a leaning peasant sinking a pit
Meets rotted rock and a slab.
The slab cracks and is split, the old grave opened,
His spade strikes iron and keenly rings.
Out of the earth he picks an ancient sword,
Hiltless with rust and the blade a long double curve,
Steel of no Roman nor Teuton king,
But metal struck in the sleeping East and lost in the raids.
He turns it awhile in the thick hands,
His thumb searching the eaten edge, and throws it aside.
The brown strip winks in the light and is sunk;
Winks once in a thousand years, in the sun and the singing
air,
And is lost again in the ground.

Attila, you rode your hordes from the Asian slopes and swept
to the west;
In the screaming dawns you struck the rich earth and left
it smoking;
Struck and butchered and lived like the crimson arc of a
cutting knife,
Roaring down Rome and the north-born Goths.
Through the reeling years you ran like a wolf,

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Side-slashing blindly from border to border the length of
that bleeding land

Till your own lust killed you, and the dark swarm broke.

In the nights the moon crawls to the west and is hidden;

The dawns bloom in the east;

The fogs gather.

Attila, in your frenzy of life you burned, but for nothing;

You roared for an instant, shook the world's width, broke
the fierce tribes.

You are outdone: the earth that you raped has been ravaged
more foully;

The cities you sacked have been burnt and rebuilt a hundred
times.

From your day to this the valleys you plundered

Have known killing and looting, the sharp violence,

The running thunder shaking the night,

A gasping moment of peace and then at it again!

Yet you struck deep: in the fields the earth gives up a
curious sword;

The bright-haired folk of a German farm

Regard with doubt a baby born with oval eyes;

In a gusty hut an old man hugs the hearth

And tells an ancient story.

William Everson

MOOD

Though words are littered to my hand
nothing they build can house my need.
Though words, a masked bedizened band,
surround me, mock — assail — evade —

though words come flowing from afar
having from ancient hills their red
and from this sky their cloud, their star,
still thirsty, mute, I bow my head.

For I am caught here needing speech,
sick with a lovely song unsung.
Waves broken on a desolate beach,
O not your strange confusing tongue

but rather the enchanted beat,
the deep eternal surge and sway —
silence, then running rapturous feet —
comes nearer what my heart would say.

Grace Fallow Norton

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A ROOM IN A HOUSE

AFTER MOVING TO A QUIET ROOM

Here purrs the pillowing kitten and we read.
The room is radiatored warm and walled
against siren and tremble from trucks, which commerce-called,
stagger below like pin-game balls that succeed
at last in entering where no pins impede ;
our table baskets fruit, which yesterday sprawled
Rubens-ripe in the market. We are installed.
We smile for speech, and silence is agreed.

But thinking shouts down silence: word-temblers tear
our walls open for the quaking world to use
the cracks in for gateway ; echoes from everywhere
over-run our room, and we pay dues
in deeds to the trembling invaders. The kitten can spare
the world, but we cannot so sinuously choose.

STUDENTS TO WORKERS

Lean on our minds, like men on jackhammers
burrowing, bursting through country rock,
opening lodes, pockets of fact.
Furnace our love, which glows like coke,
to smelt stubborn alloy for tomorrow.
Aim our anger ! And boys know anger
when bullies jeer, destroying, bashing in

Franklin Folsom

earnest hideouts tunnelled in the hillside. . . .
And we are men, and it is mines . . . and homes . . .

THE INTELLECTUAL IN 1937

Hammering shakes a house behind me—
as weathered planks patch rotten ones
and rusty nails pierce jamb and joint—
dizzying the ants in the wood, and blinding.

Thus poverty, seeking to prop up age
to linger on through a few more suns,
adds vacuum to zero to decimal point,
adds footnote to an empty page.

And the termites, forced from their tenement houses
in the ancient wood, now riot-like
go frenzyng asunder here
until some simple plan arouses.

And I, as the insects, shaken free
from sagging structure, must learn to like
the looking for new plans to engineer
and better blue-prints to build on — bitterly.

Franklin Folsom

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THE CORAL BOUGH

MING FEI

Ou Yang Hsiu
(1017-1072)

' The Mongols' homes are on their swift horses,
To hunt down the beasts is their sport.
They go wherever spring waters are sweetest,
Into fields where the grasses are lush, they escort
Their strong ponies. No settled dwelling place is theirs.
For when they hear the scream of frightened birds
Or the terror loosed from fleeing beasts,
Hard they ride to chase the frenzied herds.

Who gave away the Chinese maid to the Mongol prince?
No mercy had the winds upon her crystal face,
She met no countryman beyond the Wall
On that sorrowful journey. But when her horse forgot his
hunting pace,
She loosed the reins, unbound her heart
And hummed and wept and sang a homesick song
On the pi-ba. The Mongols gathered close to listen
And they were moved. Her precious face was like a flower
withered long,
Or like the flowing water, already flown away.

She died at the margin of the sky and earth
And her pi-ba was carried to the China of Han.

Elizabeth Y. Gilbert and Su Kai Ming

And in the court of Han, her ladies wished to try the worth
Of Ming Fei's melody. But the sadness she had left within
the lute

Was so great that the song was even sadder when they sang.
Slender were the fingers of those ladies who were born
Each in a wedding chamber. But even when the sombre
twang

Of the pi-ba filled their halls, how could they,
Who had never known the dusty road to Mongol Land,
How could they understand that this song could truly
break the heart?

THREE DESIRES

Feng Yien Chi
(c. 930)

At this April banquet, we laugh as we dine,
And I sing a song after each cup of wine.
Then I curtsy several times with decorous hands
And name my three desires: first, that my lord withstands
The summers and the winters of a thousand years.
Second, though my body undergo a thousand fears
Of age, it shall be firm and strong.
My last wish, that we shall belong
To each other like the swallows on the tree,
And that every year shall bind my gracious lord to me.

Translated by Elizabeth Y. Gilbert and Su Kai Ming

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TO DEATH

I

No one has seen the land
Where Death shall lead me.
Perhaps the hills are pale with a new hue,
There may be color which no eyes have seen,
Only at first the soft gray rain of silence.
But my two hands shall be comforted —
I shall not be lonely.

II

My heart sings
Because Earth is beautiful
And is my home.

My heart sings
Because I have a lover,
And my life is a bright path.

My heart sings
Because I have knowledge that Death
Will be as beautiful as Earth or as my lover.

III

My yellow bird
Clings to the perch in its cage.

Frances Shaw

Old and disconsolate,
Its feathers fallen,
Its song gone,
I may not set my yellow bird free.
But another kinder than I,
More merciful, more wise,
Will open the door of the cage;
Then a newly-born streak of sunlight
Will flit among the branches of the peach tree.

IV

When I am close to you,
And your bright hair is stirred
By even my lightest breath,
I could not be so glad
Unless I knew of Death.

Death the Uniter —
When our world is done
No trick of age shall part us,
We are one.

When I am close to you,
And your bright hair is stirred
By even my lightest breath,
I could not be so glad
Unless I knew of Death.

Frances Shaw

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LYRICS

ORPHAN

I wander in a tangled wood,
Thorn-deep. I go alone.
My long hair spreads a stifling hood.
My shadow searches stone

And strives to find some pathway in
The labyrinthine wild.
Stiff nettles prick my tautened skin.
Winds sigh, "Whose child — whose child?"

"No one's. No one's . . ." tall myrtle trees
Deliriously reply
Their finger-leaves in avid frieze
Distended on the sky

That holds the stars far out of reach.
"No one's. And she is lost,"
The cedars whisper each to each
All shivering with frost.

PLEA

This stillness is a kind of death
It is so still.
Now all my strength goes out of me
And all my will.

Laura Lee Bird

Supernal Shadow, be my shroud . . .
Be, Sleep, my tomb
That I need never rise to see
Dawn's dreary doom.

My sorrow is a broken brand
Burned overlong —
But leave it close beside me
To make plain my song.

AUTO-DA-FÉ

Me, my own victim
Self-impaled
On two beams
I rudely nailed :

My pride was other,
Grief the one
To support
The crossbeam on.

Laura Lee Bird

THE SHUTTLE

THIS HOUR

At break of dawn the shape of life
Is chiselled with a keener knife,
And angularities emerge
From the illusion of a curve.

This is the hour that imparts
A special nudity to hearts,
When every secret thing is known
Inward to the very bone.

No mist of rain nor veil of snow
Can blur this stark intaglio
Of sculptured hill and hollowed plain,
Poignant as thought, distinct as pain.

This is the keen recurrent edge
Of shuttling time. The frosty hedge,
The arrowed song of birds betray
The sword unsheathed in break of day.

This is the hour when men who dare
Shake lightning from their unbound hair,
And cherish in their last retreat
The will to bear, the strength to meet
Unflinchingly and with iron heart
The steel that smites the breast apart!

Thomas Lanier Williams

MY LOVE WAS LIGHT

*My love was light the old wives said —
Light was my love and better dead!*

My love was of such little worth
Stones were but wasted on her tomb;
She left no kettle by the hearth,
No crying child nor silent loom.

My love drank wine the old wives said
And danced her empty days away;
She baked no bread, she spun no thread,
She shaped no vessels out of clay

But how should old wives understand
Eternally my heart must grieve,
The cup remembering in her hand,
The dance her ghostly feet still weave

*My love was light the old wives said —
Light was my love and better dead!*

Thomas Lanier Williams

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A MEASURE OF EARTH

To Sarah Conger

PRAISE FOR STARS

The wick has burned to dark; the pen falls, for shuttered
panes

Close in more darkness. Pages are ready to fly
At the gloom's least movement. Dreaming is all but over:
shadows hang in the brain's
Stale-watered deep no longer abrim with stars and sky.

Nothing is left to do but lift a window and lean
To gaze where, bright in their yellow fleece, the planets
flock,
Heads west, on purple pasture; out of His hands they graze,
slow and clean
As His infinite breath and punctual as Heaven's clock.

Why must the mind, like a weary heart, unclose
Its pool to the stars over and over as before?
That its deep may again brim crystal from blurred repose,
Leaving its wisdom less and its beauty more.

FRIGID INTERVAL

Now frost has sealed the hum of autumn, and wind has sown
The fog-grey grass ironically bristling earth's desolate
breast —

Walter Kidd

So stripped and silenced, she numbs to defeat as stoic and
brittle as stone,
Past the ravaging lust of growth. This frosty defeat is rest.

And though her passion may freeze to the source, no seeds
despair
Of April ahead; they and earth but doze in pretense of
death—
Content at heart with crystal peace unflawed by desire and
fertile care,
Content with flameless brilliance in winter's austere breath.

For weary to death of summer labor, weary of sun,
It is right for her to accept a rest that is sterile and deep
And only right she should sparkle with cold desolation —
Her passion estranged in the crystal dream of wintry sleep.

SOIL MATE

All day I see the plowman turning
Green earth bare,—
Half-drowsy with the steady plodding,
Unaware
Of more than slow black furrows coiling
From the share.

I see him toil, uncouth and primal
As his creed:

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To sow and harvest for a planet's
Timeless need
And measure earth's great solar dreaming
In a seed.

Walter Kidd

CALIFORNIA COAST

Not in small painted towns whose color rips
The solitude of shores kelp-strung and gray,
Not in La Jolla, Carmel, Monterey,
Your beauty lies — minxes with rouge-smeared lips ;
Not along wharf lines where a city dips
Its dirty fingers in the pile-split spray —
San Pedro, Newport, San Francisco Bay —
Scumming your waters with the bilge of ships :

Yours is a torn and wistful beauty, born
On lonely beaches when the tide is low —
Fog tangled in the marsh-grass . . . a forlorn
Blue heron wading in the afterglow . . .
Dull silver lapping on a wet sand-bar . . .
And lost wings circling near a ghost-white star.

Doris Caldwell

FIVE POEMS

SILVER THAW

This room that was dark is full of glory
With sunlight striking the crystal trees
To the blown-glass air of the children's story
When Hansel creeps to the witch's eaves.
There are blue enchanted circles of shadow
Where snow lies deep under quiet boughs
And dried-up cat-tails march in the meadow
Crowned with ice toward the shining house.
The heart is caught by the brilliant moment
Serene and light as the wood-smoke flies.
All must be good, even the silent
Mills and the children's shadowed eyes.

NO BEAUTY

She that was Helen has no house
But walks tiptoe in sun and rain.
The flowers feel her not, the boughs
Are marked no whit where she has lain
And she had loveliness and I
Of common earth aand heavy clay
Recalled by no man's lusty sigh
Shall go her way.
In Helen's place I might regret
The loss of light upon my hair

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That every mortal may forget,
For all I care.

LONG LIVE THE QUEEN

Cover her face, cover her face.
She never was his heart's desire.
He set her in the queenly place
But stared from her into the fire.
Honor bound, honor bound,
Never held a heart at all.
Heart that is love's faithful hound
Dares the spikes on any wall.
What he did and what he said
Any gentleman would do.
Now the tired queen is dead,
He is lost, for he was true.

TEST OF LOVE

Men feed on women, on their flame
And women like it so.
It is the only sacrament
Beauty can know.
Men go and fail and come again,
Fearful, to find
If there be passion on the mouth
So honey kind.
What do men give women back?

Dorothy Alyea

Nothing to keep.
That kiss that is the test of love.
Silence and sleep.

GALATEA

There is no other with body and substance
Whose hands take shape
Out of the shadow, whose lips move
With words that the heart hears, tear though they may
At the padded heart, at the heart's comfortable cover.
There is no other
With eyes like a child's eyes.

Dorothy Alyea

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"THE UNACCREDITED PROFESSION"

IT MUST have been about the year 1889," wrote Robinson in the December 1930 *Colophon*, "when I realized finally, and not without a justifiable uncertainty as to how the thing was to be done, that I was doomed, or elected, or sentenced for life, to the writing of poetry.... The prospect was interesting, if it was not altogether reassuring." Now two years after his death, and with such anecdotal beginnings of biography as Mrs. Richards' and Mr. Brown's¹ (and many others, such as those scattered in Carl Van Doren's memoirs and Mabel Luhan's), and with a book of his letters and an official biography by Hermann Hagedorn soon to be issued, the curious may legitimately wonder what great sorrow or great love or similar importances there may have been in Robinson's life, and we may presently be rewarded. Yet when all that is to be known about Robinson's life is eventually known, the central fact will remain what it always has been — his doomed election to the writing of poetry. Whatever informed books of revelation (big or small) there are to come, they are likely to illuminate that fact; whatever ultimate criticism selects and shapes the more enduring from the nearly fifteen hundred pages of his *Collected Poems*, no stringency can alter Robinson's extraordinary importance to

¹E. A. R., by Laura E. Richards. Harvard University Press.
Next Door to a Poet, by Rollo Walter Brown. Appleton-Century.
Collected Poems of Edwin Arlington Robinson. Macmillan Co.
A Bibliography of Edwin Arlington Robinson, by Charles Beecher Hogan. Yale University Press.

"The Unaccredited Profession"

American literature as an example of the integrated artist.

Rollo Walter Brown, who has written skillfully of Robinson as he knew him through a dozen summers at the MacDowell Colony, reveals that "E. A.'s" most uncomfortable hours were those that always followed his receipt of printed commentary that seemed to him to misinterpret or misunderstand his work or his purposes. That was the thing that mattered! And I recall that nearly the quickest impatience I ever saw Robinson exhibit was directed at myself the first time I ever talked with him. When I suggested an autobiographical impulse in that early sonnet, *On the Night of a Friend's Wedding*, he said almost sharply, "Don't look for me in my poetry, for you won't find me there." In a moment, characteristically, he relented: "Well, maybe a little in that one," he said. (Mr. Brown relates Robinson's startled apprehension at hearing an explanation of Unamuno's theory that "all fictional characters are somewhat autobiographical.")

For, of course, it is true, in a broad sense, that Robinson is to be found in his work; in no modern poet is there, from first to last, so consecutive and consistent a purpose and expression, so unmistakable a stamp of personality shaped to style. In Robinson's first published poem, *Thalia*, which Mr. Hogan has rescued from the Gardiner, Maine, *Reporter Monthly* for his admirable *Bibliography*, we have even from the poet's twenty-first year that unmistakable approach —

Morocco, and the Muse, and mimicry
Of what God never made and never meant
For man — Himself — . . .

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We know not, dying, what we may be, dead.
We know not, living, what we are, alive.

The laconic, cautious man, distant but sympathetic, shy but friendly, humorous but with a "cool elevation of spirit," searching carefully to find the truth and reticent when he found it, these are all in the man and in the style. And this is as true of him as a younger son of a superior and temporarily prosperous family on Lincoln Street in Gardiner as it is of him as the "unintentionally" dominating figure whom Mr. Brown gives us against the Peterborough landscape. Mrs. Richards, fondly recounting scraps of memories of the young Robinson, accounts for winter sledding, summer swimming and many friends, but also: "His sister-in-law says he told her that at the age of eight or ten he had realized that he was different from the boys who liked only athletics and playing ball, and sometimes wished he had not been born."

Mrs. Richards' and Mr. Brown's books are somewhat supplementary. The grand old lady (who was already famous when Robinson was a youth) concentrates her book on the Gardiner years when the darkly handsome young man worked at his "unaccredited profession" each day until he came downstairs to play the clarinet for his nieces. *Next Door to a Poet*—and it is the clearest record to date of what Robinson "was like"—works back toward the earlier details, for Mr. Brown unfolds his book just as his friendship with Robinson unfolded; and in the remembered reminiscences are caught reflections of the long struggle Robin-

"The Unaccredited Profession"

son maintained and of that pride which was never self-satisfaction and yet became a supposition at least that his belief in his work was not entirely mistaken.

His work objectified his self-respect, and how that work absorbed him the new volume of *Collected Poems* testifies: the forty-five years of publishing have left, I figure, something like a total of 45,000 lines. The six books published since the 1929 *Collected* have been added. A very little thoughtful editorship would have made this new edition more nearly complete. We need not now, perhaps, have had rescued early poems that Robinson himself eliminated in later printings, but such strays as *Fortunatus* and the *Mordred* fragment should be brought in. These and similar matters you will find accounted for in Mr. Hogan's book; it is a bibliography done with such affectionate care that collectors, librarians, critics and biographers will find it necessary equipment. Its lists and descriptions comprise the books, the magazine and other original appearances, a selective but large catalog of printed matter about Robinson and his poetry; and the appendix pages gather in some uncollected verse and prose.

Even in that working skeleton of the poetry itself, the long and tenacious purpose shines in evidence; and when one turns to the stout collection of the real evidence — that central fact — what shall one say?

We are close to the man; that, and the very extent of his achievement, forbid any attempt at conclusive criticism which of necessity must dare to be prophecy. One repeated non-

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sense we can put aside: it is not true there was no growth in his work; in places *The Children of the Night* is nothing more than facile exercise—its real pages are those where *Richard Cory* and the portrait sonnets reveal the forming of his oblique style and the germination of his deep concern with humanity. There are some (Mr. Masters) who would reduce him to an annoying hairsplitter, others (Mr. Tate) who see him lost, unrooted; there may yet be more of us who find him a subtle analyst who probed through the indignities of mankind for a nobility compounded of pathos and humor, probed with a belief in purpose deeply rooted, under a skeptical and changing age, in an Emersonian confidence. Repetition, verbosity, and a restraint at times over-stylized will be found in these *Collected Poems*; more often, so it seems to me, a depth of understanding and an altitude of passion unmatched either in their quality or their frequency by any other American poet. And even if disagreements over the value of Robinson's work are at last settled at a lower estimate than this, we may be sure that his career must still remain in its integrity a profound and unforgettable example.

Winfield Townley Scott

THE USE OF PRIZES

As we go to press the Pulitzer Prizes for 1937 are announced. The award in poetry goes to Robert Frost for *A Further Range*, in fiction to Margaret Mitchell for *Gone With the Wind*, in drama to Moss Hart and George Kauf-

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mann for *You Can't Take It With You*, in biography to Allen Nevins for *Hamilton Fish*, and in history to Van Wyck Brooks for *The Flowering of New England*. Two of these prizes go to works of distinction, Frost's and Brooks', but even they are insufficient to relieve our conviction that the Pulitzer honors have been long sunk in the doldrums of official lethargy and public indifference, and that they now mean little or nothing to the welfare of contemporary literature. After the paltry books of verse honored in the past three years it may seem like ingratitude not to welcome a tribute to Robert Frost, but his success reminds us of what Mr. Mencken once said in another connection: it's a good deal like electing Charles W. Eliot to an honorary membership in the Elks. Perhaps the judges at last despaired of their acumen and decided to fall back on a safe investment; Mr. Frost was already given the prize in 1924 and 1931 and paid good dividends, but the fact remains that *A Further Range* is far from equal to his strongest work, and meanwhile, among several notable books of poetry published in 1936, was *The People, Yes*, by Carl Sandburg, who has never had the prize and who here produced his most remarkable volume. No one expects a prize sponsored by a dignified university to go very far in recognizing exceptional originality or creative experiment, but apparently it does not take *The Bridge* or *XXX Cantos* to send the Pulitzer committee scuttling to its cyclone cellars; the mere memory of Whitman is enough to do that.

Prizes are doubtless a thankless form of generosity. They

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usually go to the young too soon and to the old too late; to this irony the wise have long ago become hardened. But when an honor takes on the character of a public institution and sets itself up as a standard of virtue, we should resist falling into cynical indifference and do what we can to keep its prestige up. This is particularly necessary in America where literary honors are scarce enough to be worth respecting.

It may be no simple matter to keep such an honor vigorous and instructive, but there are a few simple measures to take toward that end. The first is to realize that no honor is worth having unless it represents a consistent critical standard; the second is to admit that such a standard requires a trained competence in the judges who administer it. There has been such a seeping of sinister rumors of political influence and intrigue from behind the walls of the Pulitzer board-room in recent years that there seems to be some doubt as to just who finally decides the awards. The poetry committee for several years was composed of a state governor (formerly a college dean), an operetta librettist, and a magazine editor who so far as is known has never been guilty of writing a poem or knowing much about contemporary poetry. A similarly incompetent and unprofessional jury in the case of a music or art prize would immediately raise a scandal. It is not to be assumed that a jury of poets would work out infallibly; the better a poet is the less time he has to keep informed of the work and motives of his contemporaries; but the chances are that he could tell more by a glance than a member of the New York journalistic or academic hier-

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archy could tell by a year's mulling over of new books, with the subtle pressures and cautions of literary politics in his ears.

We repeat three suggestions that have appeared before in *POETRY*: There should be on the poetry committee at least one poet and one critic of recognized distinction. The prizes should not go to the same poet twice within a space of ten years. And at least once in three years the honors in poetry should go to a work of original and unconventional character, if only to recognize the courage and imagination it takes to keep the art of verse active, and alive to its creative responsibilities.

There are fine poets already on the Pulitzer list and excellent critics of poetry within easy reach of the jury who have never been consulted on the prizes. If they were to collaborate the Pulitzer Prize in poetry might gain a genuine prestige for discrimination and courage, and in fact a similar renovation of the other committees might direct the prizes toward something better than best-sellers and box-office hits. It would then be possible to feel something better than mild boredom when the spring honors are distributed, and to accept the prizes as a real contribution to literary intelligence. Until that happens they are likely to embarrass the serenity of our few remaining Olympians, bless the efforts of the publisher's sales-force and the girl in the box office, or — in their wilder efforts at novelty — dazzle and shrivel some precocious talent in a glare of premature publicity. There are healthier ways than these for a prize to irritate and stimulate the critical attention of the public. *M. D. Z.*

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REVIEWS

THE FLAME IN STONE

The Sleeping Fury, by Louise Bogan. Chas. Scribner's Sons.

There is one word singularly useful that will one day no doubt be worn out. But that day I hope is not yet. It is the word "authentic." It expresses the feeling that one has at seeing something intimately sympathetic and satisfactory. I had the feeling acutely the other day when slipping along the east side of the Horseshoe Bend, in the long broad valley that runs down to Philadelphia. I saw sunlight, and almost in the same moment a snake fence wriggling its black spikedness over the shoulder of what in England we should call a down, and then the familiar overhanging roof of a Pennsylvania Dutch barn. It would take too long and it would perhaps be impolite to the regions in which these words will be printed to say exactly why I felt so much emotion at seeing those objects. Let it go at the fact that I felt as if, having traveled for a very long time amongst misty objects that conveyed almost nothing to my inner self — nothing, that is to say, in the way of association or remembrance — I had suddenly come upon something that was an integral part of my past. I had once gone heavily over just such fields, stopping to fix a rail or so on just such a fence, and then around the corner of just such a barn onto a wet dirt road where I would find, hitched up, the couple of nearly thoroughbred roans who should spiritedly draw over sand and boulders my buck-board to the post office at the cross-

The Flame in Stone

roads. I had come, that is to say, on something that had been the real part of my real life when I was strong, and the blood went more swiftly to my veins, and the keen air more deeply into my lungs. In a world that has become too fluid, they were something authentic.

I had precisely the same sense and wanted to use that same word when I opened Miss Bogan's book and read the three or four first words. They ran:

Henceforth, from the mind,
For your whole joy . . .

Nothing more.

I am not any kind of a critic of verse poetry. I don't understand the claims that verse poets make to be (compared with us prosateurs) beings set apart and mystically revered. Indeed if one could explain that, one could define what has never been defined by either poet or pedestrian: one could define what poetry is.

But one can't. No one ever has. No one ever will be able to. You might almost think that the real poet, whether he write in prose or verse, taking up his pen, causes with the scratching on the paper such a vibration that that same vibration continues through the stages of being typed, set up in print, printed in magazine, and then in a book — that that same vibration continues right through the series of processes till it communicates itself at last to the reader and makes him say as I said when I read those words of Miss Bogan's: "This is authentic." I have read Miss Bogan for a number of years now, and always with a feeling that I can't exactly define. More than anything, it was, as it

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were, a sort of polite something more than interest. Perhaps it was really expectation. But the moment I read those words I felt perfectly sure that what would follow would be something stable, restrained, never harrowing, never what the French call *chargé*—those being attributes of what one most avoids reading. And that was what followed—a series of words, of cadences, thought and disciplined expression that brought to the mental eye and ear, in a kind of television, the image of Miss Bogan writing at the other end of all those processes all the words that go to make up this book.

There are bitter words. But they are not harassingly bitter:

And you will see your lifetime yet
Come to their terms, your plans unmade—
And be belied, and be betrayed.

There are parallel series of antithetical thoughts, but the antithesis is never exaggerated:

Bend to the chart, in the extinguished night
Mariners! Make way slowly; stay from sleep;
That we may have short respite from such light
And learn with joy, the gulf, the vast, the deep.

There are passages that are just beautiful words rendering objects of beauty:

. . . The hour wags
Deliberate and great arches bend

In long perspective past our eye.
Mutable body, and brief name,
Confront, against an early sky,
This marble herb, and this stone flame.

And there are passages of thought as static and as tran-

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quil as a solitary candle-shaped-flame of the black yew tree
that you see against Italian heavens:

Beautiful now as a child whose hair, wet with rage and tears
Clings to its face. And now I may look upon you,
Having once met your eyes. You lie in sleep and forget me.
Alone and strong in my peace, I look upon you in yours.

There is, in fact, everything that goes to the making of one of those more pensive seventeenth century, usually ecclesiastical English poets who are the real glory of our twofold lyre. Miss Bogan may — and probably will — stand somewhere in a quiet landscape that contains George Herbert, and Donne and Vaughan, and why not even Herrick? This is not to be taken as appraisement. It is neither the time nor the place to say that Miss Bogan ranks with Marvell. But it is a statement of gratification — and a statement that from now on, when we think of poetry, we must think of Miss Bogan as occupying a definite niche in the great stony façade of the temple to our Muse. She may well shine in her place and be content.

Ford Madox Ford

“WHATEVER FORCE OF WORDS”

Selected Poems, with an Essay on Her Own Poetry, by
Edith Sitwell. Houghton, Mifflin Co.

To those who receive pleasure from the verbal arts, Miss Sitwell's *Selected Poems*, with their prefatory apologia, must certainly have something to say. Literate readers of her present pages will hardly fail to appreciate and wish well an artistic enterprise prosecuted with such conviction and consciousness, and such distinguished gifts of perception and

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association — an enterprise described elsewhere by Miss Sitwell as that of “cultivating all the possibilities of words as a medium — of understanding that medium.”

The word *all* may be noted in Miss Sitwell’s sentence. Not merely the more familiar, the more generally comprehended, the safer possibilities, but *all* the possibilities are to be cultivated. All the possibilities will include, of course, not merely the various conventional meanings which words and arrangements of words can have in common for the poet and his readers or hearers. They will include the possibilities of how the words will appear in one or another visual arrangement; of how they will sound in one or another aural arrangement; of how they will feel for the muscles of speech in one or another kinesthetic arrangement, whether overtly or emphatically uttered. They will include the possibilities of external rhyme — rather soon exhausted — the obscure subtleties of rhythm, and those delicate and important relations between vowels and consonants subsumed, in modern poetry, under the heading *texture*. Not least, they will include the cross-modalities of imagery so disconcerting to many, whereby the effect of an image originating from one sense mode is implemented with imagery from another — “the creaking light,” “fruit-buds that whimper,” “the sharp green summer rain.” All this seems a large program, sufficient for the sustained ambitions, not of one, but of many poets.

Miss Sitwell also speaks of understanding the medium, of knowing what one is doing, of conscious art. This is perhaps why so many (though by no means all) of her present

"Whatsoever Force of Words"

poems are to be read less as poems, in the usual acceptance of that term, than as phrasal and prosodic exhibits; exhibits, for example, of "the effect of words ending in *d* placed in close juxtaposition," or of "the effect on rhythm and on speed of the use of rhymes, assonances and dissonances, placed outwardly at different places in the line in most elaborate patterns," or of "alternate harsh and muted *r* sounds" on the general scheme of a poem. Readers who find it difficult to escape their established expectations in poetry will, of course, complain. Such exercises, it seems generally assumed, are for the poet's day-book, not his readers. Any assumption of this sort, however, is questionable. Progress in the arts, like progress in the sciences, is much more a collective enterprise than is commonly supposed. Moreover, any literate reader who will take the trouble to suppress his customary expectations and to read with attention these prosodic and phrasal experiments, who will receive their stimulus, who will reread them after an interval, should obtain among other valuable rewards, some renovation of his verbal experience. He should catch new glimpses of the remarkable expressive resources of language, and get some significant notion of what words, used with verified and conscious skill, can be and are.

The force of many misunderstandings seems to have weighed somewhat on Miss Sitwell, and one may wonder whether a profitable strategem in circumventing the automatic resistance of readers to novelty might not have been found in confining at least the more public of her experiments to accepted and accustomed spheres of effect, to the safe

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places. However appearances might run to the contrary, there should be ample scope for consciousness and experimental analysis even here, for the safe do not always know what they are doing, and the safest of the safe make some use of varied verbal resources. Perhaps occasionally, in some dim dilution, they have even used, or are using, some, a few, of the very ingredients of effect which it is her present study to isolate in action and to master. Experiments began at such points could rouse no outcry at their inception, and afterward innovation could be graduated (if desired) with subliminal stealth. Moreover, if an offensive were undertaken in these sectors by a poet of Miss Sitwell's competence, the result might prove surprising evidence of the preferability of conscious art to art that is often haphazard or routine or both. One may suspect, however, that with Miss Sitwell, the pleasures of pioneering have outweighed strategical considerations.

Charles K. Trueblood

A LITTLE LEGACY

Reading the Spirit, by Richard Eberhart. London: Chatto & Windus.

Loose the baleful lion, snap
The frosty bars down from his cage
And unclasp the virgin pap
Of the white world to his rage.

The obvious influence here, as in many of the shorter poems in Richard Eberhart's *Reading the Spirit*, is Blake. And William Blake, for all that he is among the great poets,

A Little Legacy

is also among the worst influences. There is none of us who cannot be instructed by Blake's insight, which is startling, bright, sure, and profound; but it is to be doubted if anyone can be taught much by Blake's way of presenting his vision. For while he seems both to declare and in his art to demonstrate a continual departure from discipline, Blake is actually under two disciplines: there is, first, the thing so intensely seen, whether derived from what he would have called innocence, or from experience; and, secondly, the strictly disciplined verse of the eighteenth century. From the practice of his predecessors Blake does indeed depart, but his ear has been trained by them. He is not so far from them as to forget them, just as in his drawings he is never really so far from Flaxman; what he adds is inimitable, for it is his own genius. The corresponding influence in Mr. Eberhart's case would appear to be the more or less forgotten Georgian poets; his natural ear is, to say the most, uncertain; and it has been trained in an inept school.

For with Mr. Eberhart, as so often with the Georgians, we never know which way a line is going to fall, whether into a flat prostration of prose, which, like an old lady after an accident, continues discursive, or into some strange contorted shape, which at first glance looks like poetry, and may be, but is poetry that has suffered a serious mishap. One thing seems fairly certain: we can no more trust him than we could most of the Georgians to keep going as he has started. It is not as though there were no gifts. *If This Be Love* is quite a good poem. And there are many felici-

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tous lines, some that are powerful; but once we have come on them we have no confidence as to what will happen next. Mr. Eberhart's Muse is like a cornered rat, ready to turn any way. There is no direction.

Mr. Eberhart is concerned, very properly, with the place of man in the modern world. The world, though it may never know it, in Mr. Eberhart's poetry comes off a very poor second. What he asserts is a negative, hysterical, and sterile individualism.

The intense quality of desire
Blasphemes, and is at fault to the core.
Silence in bitterness is the hardest thing;
But nobler to ask the fire to burn more,
If the man can endure, and can sing.
Even beyond joy and despair are spun
Unutterable remoteness in the air,
Intolerable nearness in the sun,
And the separateness of each man in his lair.

This is not badly said. But it is as far removed as possible from Blake. What that poet thought men and women required was "the lineaments of satisfied desire."

John Peale Bishop

AN UNRESPONSIVE WITNESS

Shiloh. Fragments on a Famous Theme, by Edward Doro.
G. P. Putnam's Sons.

Mr. Doro writes on the side of the angels: the angels that are the guides and messengers, are indeed the actual forms of the imagination and intelligence at the extremes of inspiration and response. He approaches seriously a serious

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theme—the theme of the Christ who did not die, of the salvation yet to come, the theme of the positive, living imagination defeated in the individual by the negative, dying imagination. The principal opposing symbols which make his machinery are the rose and the nightingale, the sun and the moon, Shiloh and Madalen, life and death; and these, with his lesser symbols, are, I take it, meant to be composed under the general symbol of the ship: the ship of need and desire, the ship in which we journey toward an ideal impossible of attainment. Within this symbolic framework we are given a number of narrative, meditative, and lyrical fragments associated with the legend of Shiloh-Christ in a variety of verse forms and with a variety of moral emphases. Mr. Doro attempts, in short, a great labor of the rational imagination: to create a complex metaphor of life and to enact it in terms of experience, to make, finally, his metaphor experience itself.

That Mr. Doro—or any other poet in such an attempt—should fail of absolute achievement is, because of the insufficiency of any available intellectual structure to the expressive needs of the sensibility, inevitable. It only poses the failure in its radical form to indicate it yourself, as Mr. Doro does, by calling your poem *Fragments on a Famous Theme*. You thus merely admit beforehand your intellectual inability to master and respond to the terms of the aspiration you feel. The result of such an admission is pretty constant: you tend to fail where you had no need to, in the dramatic as well as the intellectual mastery of your material; you fail because

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you make insufficient use, sometimes no use at all, of the dramatic structural form ready everywhere to your hand; and there is emphatically no need for that. In Mr. Doro's poem, speaking of the larger compositional elements, it is only an exaggeration to say that what is his beginning should have been his end, his end should have been his middle, and his middle should have been his beginning. Exaggeration or not, the point is that his *array* of material is confused. The virtues of sequence, historical or narrative line, and progressive deepening of insight are quite lost because never looked for. To condense a trope of Henry James, the impact of his parade is that of the mob which passes all at once. It is the mob of inspiration and the only response we can make to it is by joining it; and that is the last adherence poetry may own, as it is no response at all but only a blind surrender. Then, and that is the case here, neither the poem nor its readers can make other than unresponsive witness to the aspiration that moved them. Hence, on the moral plane where aspiration enacts itself, we get, from this poem of the Christ who did not die, futility instead of despair, confusion instead of ecstasy, mere homelessness instead of exile; precisely as in life itself. The confusion of form dictates the obfuscation of purpose.

It might be answered that composition is not taught in our day; that the beliefs and conventions that foster and operate the sensibility are too weak for the weight of poetry; that the best mirror for a fragmentary mind is a broken one. Let us adopt this popular and irresponsible view. There

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remain still the fragments recorded, and the responsibility they show for the most effective presentation. If your poetry is in your passages and lines and words alone, then your labors at the craft of detail ought to be unremitting. That the fact is to the contrary—that the detail of craft flourishes only in the composed imagination, however, small or imperfect the composition—Mr. Doro's *Shiloh* adds witness. A good half of Mr. Doro's rhymes are either dangling, inept of sense, or disfigurements of sense; they make hollows in his good passages, add baggage, or impede motion. Many of his similes are putative, mere ungrounded associations, as when he compares sea waves with milky oxen led to shore. Some of his descriptive personifications diminish instead of heighten emotional certitude, as when waves *clamp their jaws* on the shore. The metaphors are often incomplete and their conspiring parts lack identity, as when

The selfsame earth reclaims us one and all,
When sorrow passes, and angels rush upon the squall.

Again, faulty observation may stultify an image, as when, on a sailing ship, "Shiloh *advanced* to the helm." Either Mr. Doro does not know a helm or has never seen a ship: a few lines further on, still in a gale, and with no crew but shadows, we find Shiloh "at the prow." In fact, Mr. Doro's words make a generality of the singularly inept; we are brought up again and again by just the wrong word, the word that takes away meaning and destroys or makes mock of feeling: a fatal ineptitude of which the following is only a particularly gross example:

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Eidolon, you who have the plaintive face
And bearing, the broody grace.

It is perhaps unkind to mark a man's ignorance. *Broody* is a very different word from *brooding*: it is limited to hens and other fowl, and means apt or inclined to breed, to sit on eggs; a capacity uncommon in the unsubstantial phantom, *Eidolon*. It would be unkind to mark the ignorance if the example were isolated; but it is not; examples are abundant — e.g., "restive mire . . . the filth of errant living . . . the stench of lilacs," etc. Poetry does not prosper in such language, nor its fragments shine; and that Mr. Doro should resort to it in every passage above ten lines in length is the chief cause of his poem's unresponsiveness to material which, I am sure, he has deeply felt.

R. P. Blackmur

HARD AGAINST THIS WORLD

Address to the Living, by John Holmes. Henry Holt & Co.

There is more than one relationship between circumstance, act, response, and the words men make out of such things. Communication is at once practical and provocative.

On the provocative side, distinguished from the mere ability to utter a request or give a command, stands poetry. There always has been and always will be a lot of pother about the nature of poetry, and poets don't help matters much by being self-conscious about it. The milkman doesn't wake you up in the morning to tell you what an inspiring trade he follows. He just delivers the milk, and isn't even there when you drink it. John Holmes has a superior prod-

Hard Against This World

uct to deliver but distracts the reader a little at the start by handing out a tract with his bottles. He wants you to know what poetry is. Fortunately for him, by the time the reader has the cap off the bottle the tract is forgotten.

Not every poet whose work gets between covers could begin a book as well as the title poem begins this one:

And light, light: on the upper side of earth
It lies, and on the under side of cloud;
We are the living, who in light between
Go forth at morning blest and golden-browed,
And on our shoulders wear the afternoon;
Light is the last fact and the first that falls
On mortal eyes, and while they stare at time,
Light is a calendar on outdoor walls.

John Holmes is not one of those people, for all his pre-occupation with praise of his craft, who regards poetry as a kind of cultural gadget. His works strike the ear as thought coming through form, as power comes through wires, not as mere form which could carry power if the poet had any to transmit.

His phrasing is simple and direct, without unnecessary ornamentation, having that best ornament of all communication, a designed and executed fitness, no less praiseworthy because it may be instinctive:

Once in a lucid and ironic season,
I looked behind the mask the living wear,
Hardly expecting either fiend or angel
Under the tarnished brightness of that stare,
But saw a meager spirit, hungry, thirsty,
Refuse the rushing fountain of the heart;
Account his age on fingers; always careful
To utter important words too far apart.

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The reader who is concerned, as many undoubtedly are, with poetry as a stockbroker is with ticker-tape, will perhaps, in his haste to take profit, pass John Holmes by as lacking in speculative appeal. Yet such value as *Address to the Living* represents has more than once sustained mankind through periods which saw mere speculative appeal become a laughing stock.

A poet is not merely someone who can create a style in sound nor even one who, like a dachshund or a sealyham, can express individuality and drive to distraction others who are mere spaniels by coaxing them to change. A poet is someone whose observing nearness to the circumstances and details of life have given him that passionate directness which in any company may command attention. He is the man to whom we instinctively attribute authority as we instinctively attribute beauty to a woman who commands our attention no matter what her features. John Holmes is a poet, and his first book puts exceptionally few veils between the author and the reader. Its lyric quality is unmistakable:

Put all the past behind,
One bird we sent away
Will come back with its kind,
And come this time to stay.

We have not long to wait
Until with an airy thunder
Our ears reverberate,
Our eyes are filled with wonder
To see the flock fly home,
And, wheeling down in flight,
Come suddenly to bloom
And turn the green tree white.

Raymond Holden

Against the Grain

AGAINST THE GRAIN

Primitivism and Decadence, A Study of American Experimental Poetry, by Yvor Winters. Arrow Editions.

Yvor Winters has devoted to criticism a mind of rare, if somewhat specialized, sensitiveness and equally rare severity. His own verse is notable for an ardent care in composition which dignifies the art of poetry even when that appears to be a chief part of its intention. He is thus in a position to write, and has written exquisitely, of other work. In the development of his verse and criticism, furthermore, Winters has followed a curve of great historical interest. Beginning in the Twenties with minute, finely cut poems in a manner related to the Chinese, he proceeded first to longer experiments in free verse and then to the adoption of traditional English verse forms. This progression was unusually deliberate, decisive in the end, and accompanied by one of the earliest formulations of critical standards by any writer in Winters' field. It was so early, in fact, that while Winters' rediscovery of traditional values is typical of his generation, it is largely independent and owes little impetus to the social awakening of the Thirties which instructed many of his contemporaries. In the five essays contained in this book Winters has condensed his critical work from 1929 to 1934 and has shown how his adverse judgments on modern experimental poetry were derived from his study of "the ethical significance of rhetoric." The book is sharply written and extremely valuable both as a corrective to lazy acceptances and as a reminder of possibilities in literature which are not

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well ignored. It is marked, however, by a precious and puritanical temper which has been increasingly evident in Winters' reviews and which the writer's ethic apparently permits him to confuse with strength of mind.

It is probably necessary to commit to unqualified damnation much of the mediocre experimentation of the past twenty years; it is also sane to remember that even fine literature is created by men of mortal clay and is as liable as they are to error and sin; nevertheless, some of Winters' incidental remarks on the work of Hemingway, Pound, Eliot, and James Joyce in particular have a perverse, almost invidious ring. At times his style is nearer to that of argument than that of exposition, and it is often difficult to agree that his conclusions wholly follow from his premises and the evidence he has adduced. The evidence itself, as represented by examples from the work of Crane, Eliot, Williams, Bridges, Moore, and others, will not often bear without qualification the interpretations he has placed upon it. Moreover, he has regrettably slighted some of his own material. The penetrating essay entitled *The Extension and Reintegration of the Human Spirit* which appeared in *The American Caravan* for 1929 is perceptible mainly by its emasculation, and instead of expanding the criticism of Yeats which appeared in his review of T. Sturge Moore in *The Hound and Horn* in 1933, he has let that poet off with a passing reference. The excuse that his subject is modern American experimental poetry will scarcely do for a book in which the merits of Moore and Bridges are so much

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discussed. That these were deliberate omissions appears in Winters' prefatory remarks to the second essay, on the structural methods of the experimental poets: "I shall have little to say of their talents, their *ineliminable* virtues, but shall rather take these for granted." Economy is surely better served than justice if we must remain in doubt as to just how Winters understands and responds to the excellences of these writers. The word I have italicized might almost suggest that he has done his best to eliminate them, and this, stated in its strongest terms, is the impression which most damages his book.

Its narrowness, as I have indicated, occurs in the application of Winters' principles rather than in the principles themselves. Winters looks on poetry as a formal discipline which is also a "technique of contemplation," enabling the poet to define a "moral attitude toward experience." These concepts are not as frigid as they sound; they are mature and at their proper generality they cover the composition of most lyric poetry. Moreover, Winters defines admirably the wide latitude of means by which poems get written, pure form and pure feeling being present in varying degrees and intensity of seizure. In judging the moral attitudes thus perfected he has two criterions: formal organization and complexity of the experience mastered. These again are applicable to most poetry. But to show what he means Winters quotes a sonnet by Allen Tate and a lyric by Howard Baker which he sets up as better in both respects than the work of Eliot and MacLeish. Aside from the oddity of linking the

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two latter without differentiation, it seems to me that the experience mastered in *Ash Wednesday*, for example, is no less complex for being rarer than Tate's and that there would be a fair presumption of higher organization in Eliot's poem from the mere fact that Eliot was not content with the sonnet form. It is a further *non sequitur* to say as Winters does that because Eliot's form is generally "loose," paraphrase constitutes a much slighter betrayal. Later, in a section on "pseudo-reference," Winters puts such pressure on his logic to justify his tastes that a rather oblique but quite paraphrasable passage from Hart Crane is called "unintelligible," Eliot's lyrically suggested symbols of international society in *Gerontion* are taken as "references to a non-existent plot," and in general the very pertinent question of how far a poet may be successful with imaginary or arbitrary references is more aggravated than answered. It is almost as if in making out a case for the unquestionable structural mastery of his two admired exemplars, the late Poet Laureate and T. Sturge Moore, Winters felt impelled not only to deprecate the original forms of Pound, Eliot, and Joyce but to forego mentioning their specific materials and impulses. For example, it is merely absurd to say that the "central theme" of *Ulysses* is that "romantic antithesis of moods" which Winters rightly condemns as stylistic adolescence in Laforgue and readily demolishes in the apologetics of Kenneth Burke. The essay on *Poetic Convention* in this book and the final essay on meter contain qualifications which mitigate this effect and add to their great distinction as

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guides to some of the subtlest traditional resources of poetry. But it is disappointing on the whole to feel that Winters has not squarely met the questions he has raised.

Robert Fitzgerald

COMMENT

POETRY is happy to announce a new prize to be added to its list of awards next November. This is the Harriet Monroe Memorial Prize, of \$100, and has been established by Inez Cunningham Stark of Chicago, a friend of POETRY's founder and of the magazine, by whose generosity this award will be given annually for the next five years. It is specified that the prize shall be given this first year, if possible, to the writer of a sonnet or sequence of sonnets printed in our current volumes, XLIX and L, and we hope that poets will respond by submitting work of a quality worthy of honor next autumn, but to be published before the October issue.

Our prize list next November promises to be one of the longest in POETRY's history. We are thus far certain of the following: the Helen Haire Levinson Prize, the Guarantors Prize, the Oscar Bluementhal Award for Poetry, the Jeannette Sewell Davis Prize (to a young poet), the Midland Authors' Prize, and a Lyric Prize in Memory of Harriet Monroe, with our new Harriet Monroe Memorial Prize now added. This generous list lends the greatest possible encouragement to the staff of the magazine in their work of continuing POETRY and of renewing its financial security for the future.

On April 23rd, in the Crystal Ballroom of the Blackstone Hotel in Chicago, there was held the annual dinner of the Friends of Literature, the Chicago society whose awards to poets and to POETRY in recent years have formed a distinguished and valuable patronage of American literature. The subsidiary organization of the Friends of Literature is the Chicago Foundation for Literature, which for seven years has given a series of awards to writers on the occasion of its annual banquet in April. This year the dinner was in the form of a Memorial to Harriet Monroe, with its benefits assigned to POETRY. The evening combined a happy memory of Miss Monroe's life, work, and friendships in Chicago with an observance of her long labors on behalf of modern literature. The president of the Friends of Literature, Mrs. Carl I. Henrikson, introduced Dr.

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Preston Bradley, who acted as toastmaster, he in turn introducing a number of guest speakers who paid their tribute to Miss Monroe and the place of POETRY in the cultural life of Chicago. These included Edith Franklin Wyatt, Helena Carus, Mary Donaghey, Lewellyn Jones, Rabbi Louis L. Mann of the Mecca Temple, George B. Utley of the Newberry Library, Robert Ross of the British Consulate, Elder Olson, Marion Strobel Mitchell, Roscoe Thomas, and the Editor and Associate Editor of the magazine. POETRY is greatly indebted to the interest of the Friends of Literature, and hopes their example will be followed by other societies in this and other communities who have the good state of American literature at heart.

Another Chicago literary society, the Friends of American Writers, held its annual banquet at the Congress Hotel two evenings earlier, on April 21st. This society, through its Foundation for Literature, has also been generous in its recognition of Chicago and Middle Western authors, and in its benefactions to POETRY. It closed another successful year with awards for verse (to Lionel Wiggam, for *Landscape with Figures*) and non-fiction (to Edward S. Rines, for *Old Historic Churches of America*), and with talks from local writers and editors—Kenneth Horan, Marion Strobel, Franklin Meine, Otto Eisenschiml, F. B. Millett, Thomas Clark, and the Editor of POETRY—who were followed by Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam of the Methodist Church. The speakers were graciously introduced by Mrs. Charles B. Spaulding, of the Board of Directors, and were preceded by remarks of welcome from Mrs. Frederic H. Bradshaw, president of the society.

The annual list of fellowships awarded by the Guggenheim Foundation of New York this year included the names of five poets: Louise Bogan (who was granted an extension of her interrupted appointment of 1933), Frederic Prokosch, Harold Lewis Cook, Jesse Stuart, and Sterling Brown, all of whom will practice their art abroad or in various parts of America during the ensuing twelve months.

The *Journal des Poètes*, of Brussels, Belgium, is preparing an anthology of contemporary American poetry, all schools to be represented. Poets may submit three or four poems for consideration, addressing them to René Meurant, 20, rue Adolphe Mathieu.

Some Poems of Mallarmé, as translated by Roger Fry, which appeared in London (Chatto & Windus) last winter, has now been published in America by the Oxford University Press. The English edition of this book was reviewed in our March issue.

Comment

A Bibliography of the Works of Edna St. Vincent Millay, by Karl Yost, has just been published by Harper & Bros. For this book Harold Lewis Cook has written an appreciative essay on Miss Millay's work, and she herself has contributed a foreword. The volume includes complete collations of Miss Millay's verse in books and periodicals, and full lists of critical books and articles about it.

The League of American Writers is holding another Congress in New York on June 4th-6th, at Carnegie Hall and the New School for Social Research. Addresses will include factual and critical analyses of the novel, drama, poetry, films, and radio, and on recent activities in other countries. The Congress also plans to launch an organization of American writers of a national scope. The call to order has been signed by, among others, Van Wyck Brooks, Malcolm Cowley, Waldo Frank, Langston Hughes, Archibald MacLeish, Genevieve Taggard, Jean Starr Untermeyer, Lewis Mumford, Robert Morss Lovett, and other representatives of various branches of contemporary literature.

The League is also sponsoring a book of translations of Spanish loyalist verse written out of the Civil War. Rolfe Humphries is in charge (125 East 24th St., New York) and such poets as Stanley Kunitz, Babette Deutsch, William Carlos Williams, Genevieve Taggard, and Muriel Rukeyser will participate.

Mr. Samuel French Morse, of Danvers, Mass., was graduated a year ago from Dartmouth College, and has twice before appeared in POETRY.

Frances Shaw (Mrs. Howard van Doren Shaw), of Chicago, is the author of two books of verse and an old contributor to this magazine.

Mr. Walter Evans Kidd lives in Portland, Oregon. Doris Caldwell (Mrs. Jos. A. C.) lives in San Diego, Cal. Mr. Franklin Folsom, born in Boulder, Colo., in 1907, graduated from the University of Colorado, taught at Swarthmore, studied three years as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford, and now lives in New York.

Grace Fallow Norton (Mrs. George Macrum) of Sloaburg, N. Y., is the author of *Little Gray Songs from St. Joseph's* and *The Miller's Youngest Daughter*.

Dorothy C. Alyea (Mrs. Ethan D. A.), lives in Montclair, N. J. Miss Laura Lee Bird lives in Brenham, Texas.

The other poets of this issue are new contributors to POETRY:

Mr. Philip Parker, born in Jamaica in 1904, received his B.A.

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and B.Litt. at Oxford and has been a staff member of the Bodleian Library. He lives at Eastbourne, England.

Mr. William Everson lives in Selma, Cal., and has issued a pamphlet of verse, *These Are the Ravens*. Mr. Thomas Lanier Williams, of St. Louis, Mo., has recently attended Washington University.

Miss Elizabeth Yolande Gilbert, of Boston, Mass., has translated with Mr. Su Kai Ming a volume of Chinese poems, mostly of the Sung Dynasty, never before rendered into English, to be called *The Coral Bough*, from which we print two examples.

BOOKS RECEIVED

ORIGINAL VERSE:

Collected Poems of Edwin Arlington Robinson. Macmillan Co.
The Fall of the City, A Verse Play for Radio, by Archibald MacLeish. Farrar & Rinehart.
Selected Poems, by Edith Sitwell. Houghton Mifflin Co.
Sebastian, by Rayner Heppenstall. J. M. Dent & Sons, London.
Heron at Sunset, by Jay G. Sigmund. English Club of Cornell College, Mt. Vernon, Iowa.
51 Poems, by Robert Goldsborough. Scribner Press, New York City.
Quiet Corner, by Patience Strong. E. P. Dutton & Co.
Drum Beats, by Kendall Banning. Kaleidograph Press, Dallas, Tex.
Questing Spirit, by Emma L. Johnston. Banner Press, Atlanta, Ga.
Music of Morning, by Katharine Kennedy. Banner Press.
The Luring Flute, by Caroline Lawrence Dier. Dorrance & Co.
Out With the Tide, by Lucie Karme Gillett. Dorrance & Co.
The Starry Scroll, by Louise Winsor Brooks. The Little Book House, Nantucket Island, Mass.

A TRANSLATION, PROSE AND AN ANTHOLOGY:
Ion of Euripides, trans. with notes by H. D., Houghton Mifflin Co.
Milton and Wadsworth, Poets and Prophets, by Sir Herbert J. C. Grierson. Macmillan Co.
A Bibliography of the Works of Edna St. Vincent Millay, by Karl Yost. With an Essay by Harold Lewis Cook and Introductions and Three Poems by Miss Millay. Harper & Bros.
Robert Frost: A Bibliography, by W. B. Shubrick Clymer and Charles R. Green. Jones Library, Amherst, Mass.
Modern Troubadours, A Collection of Contemporary American Poetry. Artcraft Books, San Francisco, Cal.

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calls the attention of its friends, subscribers, and contributors to the ways in which they may assist the magazine in achieving a new security, and in celebrating its coming **Twenty-fifth Anniversary** by planning on another quarter-century of literary distinction and discovery:

1. Subscriptions to the Guaranty Fund are earnestly solicited. These may be of \$50 or more, annually, and are the chief means of insuring the permanent security of the magazine.
2. Supporting subscriptions of \$10 or more will be welcomed.
3. Regular Subscriptions are desired, especially in groups, from individuals, schools, libraries, study clubs, classes, and literary societies. Our *Special Anniversary Rate* is now in force (see page over) and subscribers may avail themselves of a reduced price on subscriptions extending over a three-year period.

If the art of poetry is to prosper, it must have its fair share of the patronage and benefits which are lavished so freely on the other arts.

One American newspaper editor has said: "When I think of the millions that go to the aid of music, and the enormous bequests and heavy prizes in the art world — and nothing for poetry — I question whether we have intelligent patrons of the fine arts. . . . A dozen or so of the distinctive poems printed in POETRY did more to change the face of American literature in this period than thousands of ballyhooed novels done in the same years."

A distinguished American poet has said: "No other publication has existed in America where any writer of poetry could more honorably place his writings. . . . I not only wish POETRY to continue, but I wish it to function as actively as it did in 1912. A country that cannot maintain a 'trade journal' for its writers of verse, or feed its poets, is of the 'dull and speechless tribes'."

**PLEASE COMMUNICATE WITH THE EDITORS
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OVER

The friends of poetry should be the friends of **POETRY**, by all odds the most valuable magazine of verse in contemporary letters. We do not hesitate to say that a library without **POETRY** cannot fully or accurately reflect the living culture of the English-speaking world.

—*The Wilson Bulletin for Librarians (July, 1937)*

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The Cover Designed by Eric Gill

Manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped and self-addressed envelope or by international coupons from poets living abroad. Otherwise we must decline hereafter to return them and they will be destroyed.

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Poetry

A Magazine of Verse

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No. IV

JULY 1937

TWO MORNINGS AND TWO EVENINGS

PARIS, 7 A.M.

I make a trip to each clock in the apartment:
Some hands point histrionically one way
And some point others, from the ignorant faces.
Time is an Etoile; hours diverge
So much that days are journeys round their suburbs,
Circles surrounding stars, overlapping circles.
The short, half-tone scale of winter weathers
Is a spread pigeon's wing.
Winter lives under a pigeon's wing, a dead wing with damp
feathers.

Look down into the courtyard. All the houses
Are built this way, with ornamental urns
Set on the mansard roof-tops where the pigeons
Take their walks. It is like introspection
To stare inside, or retrospection,
A star inside a rectangle, a recollection:

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This hollow square could easily have been there
— The childish snow-forts, built in flashier winters,
Could have reached these proportions and been houses ;
The mighty snow-forts, four, five, stories high,
Withstanding spring as sand-forts do the tide,
Their walls, their shape, could not dissolve and die,
Only be overlapping in a strong chain, only be stone,
Be grayed and yellowed now like these.

Where is the ammunition, the piled-up balls
With the star-splintered hearts of ice ?

This sky is no carrier-warrior-pigeon
Escaping endless intersecting circles.
It is a dead one, or the sky from which a dead one fell.
The urns have caught his ashes or his feathers.
When did the star dissolve, or was it captured
By the sequence of squares and squares and circles, circles ?
Can the clocks say : is it there below
About to tumble in snow.

A MIRACLE FOR BREAKFAST

*"Miracles enable us to judge of
doctrine, and doctrine enables us
to judge of miracles."*

At six o'clock we were waiting for coffee,
Waiting for coffee and the charitable crumb
That was going to be served from a certain balcony,
— Like kings of old, or like a miracle.

Elizabeth Bishop

It was still dark. One foot of the sun
Steadied itself on a long ripple in the river.

The first ferry of the day had just crossed the river.
It was so cold we hoped the coffee
Would be very hot, seeing that the sun
Was not going to warm us; and that the crumb
Would be a loaf each buttered, by a miracle.
At seven a man stepped out on the balcony.

He stood for a minute alone on the balcony
Looking over our heads towards the river.
A servant handed him the makings of the miracle,
Consisting of one lone cup of coffee
And one roll, which he proceeded to crumb,
His head, so to speak, in the clouds — along with the sun.

Was the man crazy? What under the sun
Was he trying to do, up there on his balcony!
Each man received one rather hard crumb,
Which some flicked scornfully into the river,
And, in a cup, one drop of the coffee.
Some of us stood around, waiting for the miracle.

I can tell what I saw next; it was not a miracle.
A beautiful villa stood in the sun
And from its doors came the smell of hot coffee.
In front, a baroque white plaster balcony
Added by birds, who nest along the river,
— I saw it with one eye close to the crumb —

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And galleries and marble chambers. My crumb
My mansion, made for me by a miracle,
Through ages, by insects, birds, and the river
Working the stone. Every day, in the sun,
At breakfast time I sit on my balcony
With my feet up, and drink gallons of coffee.

We licked up the crumb and swallowed the coffee.
A window across the river caught the sun
As if the miracle were working, on the wrong balcony.

FROM THE COUNTRY TO THE CITY

The long, long legs,
League-boots of land, that carry the city nowhere,
Nowhere; the lines
That we drive on (the satin-stripes on harlequin's
Trousers, tights);
His tough trunk dressed in tatters, scribbled over with
Nonsensical signs;
His shadowy, tall dunce-cap; and best of all his
Shows and sights,
His brain appears, throned in "fantastic triumph,"
And shines through his hat
With jewelled works at work at intermeshing crowns,
Lamé with lights.
As we approach, wickedest clown, your heart and head,
We can see that

Elizabeth Bishop

Glittering arrangement of your brain consists, now,
 Of mermaid-like,
Seated, ravishing sirens, each waving her hand-mirror ;
 And we start at
Series of slight disturbances up in the telephone wires
 On the turnpike.
Flocks of short, shining wires seem to be flying sidewise.
 Are they birds?
They flash again. No. They are vibrations of the tuning-fork
 You hold and strike
Against the mirror-frames, then draw for miles, your dreams,
 Out country-wards.
We bring a message from the long black length of body:
 “Subside,” it begs and begs.

SONG

Summer is over upon the sea.
The pleasure yacht, the social being,
That danced on the endless polished floor,
Stepped and side-stepped like Fred Astaire,
Is gone, is gone, docked somewhere ashore.

The friends have left, the sea is bare
That was strewn with floating, fresh green weeds.
Only the rusty-sided freighter
Goes past the moon's marketless craters
And the stars are the only ships of pleasure.

Elizabeth Bishop

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LAND'S EDGE

PROVINCETOWN, 1936

Fat-pronged starfish, oyster-fed,
That slow on spirit fingers slide;
Snails in fat blue folds that spread
Purple feet below the tide;

Crabs that, humped in stolen homes,
Fence from doors they cannot lock;
Polyps budded pink like wombs
Filamented to the rock;

Sand-dabs sandside up in pools,
That batlike slip the snatching hand;
Tiny mackerel trapped in twinkling schools;
The little silver eels that dive into the sand;

Mussels with broken hinges, sea-crabs lopped
Of legs, black razor-clams split double, dried
Sea dollars, limpets chivied loose and dropped
Like stranded dories rolling on their side

— They lose their juice and stiffen in the sun:
The tide that shrinks has shed them like a scurf;
The tide that floods will stir with waves that stun
Frail shapes that crush before the faintest surf.

Edmund Wilson

PAST MIDNIGHT

After writing,
Reading late,
Too tired and tense
To take the author's sense,
My mind a metronome
That keeps its proper beat,
Always starting and alighting,
I strive to mark as if it were my own
The other's pulse too stuttering and slow,
To pull his periods straight,
To stretch them tighter than the vibrant bow
That speeds the arrow home.

MORNING

Dawns, dawns, that split with light
These tight and tarnished streets,
Dividing blinds drawn tight,
Displaying livid sheets,

You flood the window-ledge,
But here in mind and heart
Lights enter harder than the mason's wedge
That thrusts the rock apart.

Edmund Wilson

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TWO POEMS

BLOOD AND SEASHELL

My changing blood that hoards
This constant sound of sea,
That ranging in its course
Keeps fleshless breath in me,

Sings nothing till this shell —
Wound for wave music — takes
The radiant miracle
Broadcast in ethered wakes

Where vein scuds of the brine
In salt thunder loom,
Inundate the room.
The even roaring breaks

Heavy; Atlantic storm
Piles on the eastern line,
Topples with wind-whine, rips
The Narragansett calm.

Or lying with laden fog
Sea labors, a spent beast
Whose dying, hallowed with horns,
Clots the midnight's breast;

Winfield Townley Scott

Or clear and easeful sprawls
Under transfixed star surf
And slowly with long urge
Wells up the drowning walls

That crumple into sea,
Sway, loosed, and wash in suds'
Soft purr on granite coast
Where, presently, the sun.

Wave-length lies undialed
Ear empty of my youth,
Till joined: along that pulse
My memory and my truth.

AT LEAST ONE SPRING

That freshet of March night air, a violence
Inundating the hills till earth is filled
Up to the sky, rends all in unseen torment:
Torrent of black cloud and wet, waiting silence.

Such swelling of space-walls — crack and boom,
Wrench of torn timber, and city towers
A leaning swept trellis terrible
With no flowers: the cold returning waves

Looming and falling through the opening air;
Opening air that steadily to morning

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Undams the rising bulwarks of the sun
Which on all wrack lays its enormous care.

And Spring — morning of year — whose busy peace
Out of the evil night, split for it, came —
Come over us, over us if we have time,
With that unspoken meaning promised us ;

Even though the seed hold always not only life,
Bloom yet again ; for all, at least one Spring.

Winfield Townley Scott

CITY NIGHTFALL

HOME

Home, the perfect day and evening, the wind
quiet in the trees, time a shy bird folded
on a branch, no wars of the world to wage,
peace : this is the meaning of the voyage.

So he dreams of the impossible region
beyond death, the subway train, the telescope,
beyond the guile of smiling advertisements,
the heavy oration of newspaper print ;

seeking a liberation and a meaning
more than a subway strap for the weary body,
more than the uncertainty of work and no work,
and the earth unsteady beneath the feet and turning.

He is a lost flyer in a blind wind ;
people come and go on a million errands,
their eyes cold with emptiness, friendless altogether
and circumstance crouched in the sky, a tiger.

How far from the hearth of peace, how far from home
where the smoke from the chimney climbs from a friendly
flame —
still seek in love, in that despairing embrace,
in the last spasm, the mystery of peace.

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So going home, and so again betrayed
by love, most lonely, most beaten in that failure,
returning always to the voice, the house, the hour —
and the nervous el rattling overhead.

THE WISH

Standing when day falls on Manhattan Bridge
time ends in a sudden rush of darkness, the lights
hang at the edge of the world. This moment is
the static one we wished, the perfect marriage:
pale evening and pale water come together,
the steamer rocked on the waves, the gull on the waves,
land and sea quietly locked in love.

Opposites achieve the balance that is peace :
hot and cold clash no more, wet and dry ;
the oppressing hand falls in penitence
on the worker's shoulder, in this moment
immortal love. So in the half light of an unreal world
we almost are persuaded by death's voice,
the husky-voiced autumn wind persuading the leaves.

BRIDGES

Resting at evening on the forsaken pier
we saw the bridges mounting the dark sky,
a brave ascent. We felt peace then

Robert Friend

not of mystery but the deep gladness
that the hope was there.

Nothing that factories meant could assail us
or burnt wheatfields or the club
descending. Our lives were like
these bridges, making a path
over this night of terror and despair.

HISTORY

What was the shadow on the sun? and looking up
we saw the sudden headlines heavy under the sky;
they moved, broke ranks, swirled, and now a wave
washed over us, engulfing the Brooklyn restaurant:
The Italians have entered the last Ethiopian city.

Ebb'd; and the quiet sunshine on the cutlery
resumed the historic pathway of its life,
the trolley car clanged its bell, the waitress
came with the order, the radio wept again.

When we looked at the cold clock on the wall,
we saw it was the twentieth century.

Robert Friend

TWO PRELUDES

REVISIT

I went again where April rains
First woke the thew from youthful rest
And wind first curved perplexing pains
About my unsuspecting breast.
Through restless broom I wandered round.
I saw a young one stand and shiver,
His careless clothes heaped on the ground
But he, forgetful of the river.
Youth-wildered eyes stared into space
As though an aerial image there
Weaved gaze with sunlight into lace
For braiding weeds of young despair.
He felt but failed to understand ;
I understood and yearned to feel.
Had zealous Time ceased on that sand
When April winds began to steal
About my form to intimate
Desire, then I had been content
Though such arrests predestinate
Wonder forever. No lament
For comprehension would ever fret
My mind — when what remains unknown
Can by no loss beget regret,
Nor leave a shade when it is flown.

Harris Downey

AT THE CLAVIER

Do not regard young Tom unmotivated
If his muscles and his music disagree ;
The rhythms of them both are well related
In intervals unheard by you or me.

He sits phlegmatic at the keyboard
His fingers crawling andantino ;
But a complement for every chord,
Within his heart, beats allegretto.

Do not laugh at his incongruous tears.
He cannot know how much he conceals
When unaware that subtle fears
Make him express just half of what he feels.

His heart so tender, predilection closed
A loneliness about it as its need,
For any crow will peck upon a heart exposed
And men will crush it just to see it bleed.

Do not ask : Wherefore springs your bliss ?
What have you said ? He would not understand,
Not knowing the mute periphrasis
Between the red heart and the blue-veined hand.

Harris Downey

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LOUISIANA

Since you and I do both appear
and go like seasons of the year
that change and are no longer here,

but, silently as weed and rose,
are taken where the year bestows
its burials of silent snows,

their shifting circumstances of sun
wind rain bud bloom and seed undone
they come and vanish one by one,

then let my body's altered pride
impatient heart, ebb'd tide by tide,
affirm that love the years deride:

Proud body that my love had taken
unfleshed your soul, your eyes have shaken
my soul awake as sleepers waken

unburdened of worn solitude
flesh singular and spirit nude
ungarmented by you, accrued

new seeds of time in season sped
autumnal to your body's bed,
our resurrection of us dead

William Stephens

whereby like flowers from the ground
our buried selves arise unbound
and breathe eternity around.

William Stephens

THE MAN IN MEDALS BLOWS A HORN

The birds have learned to imitate
the ping ping of bullets
the children bark in the blue yards
shadows of wire hum on the unplanted ground.

In these nights
our illusions, outfitted in gay
duncecaps and gilded pleats,
toddle across the starry air
above the Olympic ice-festival
making for the lake

 where
against the red and yellow wheels
that whizz, grow smaller,
elaborate, whizz again, spell out
in spark-showers a tyrant's name

 they explode
leaving the air hollow black
and feverish with echoes.

Harold Rosenberg

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THREE POEMS

BY AN AVIARY

Doves should build in branches green,
Peacocks on shadowy lawns be seen :
The duck that puffs her painted breast
Below tall reeds should hide her nest :
The little parrots, green and blue,
In monkey woods should clamber through
The branches of a tree that bears
Blossoms of tincture bright as theirs :
The coral-footed fantails' note
Should echo round a garden-cote :
Flamingoes drill in stiff platoon
Where tropic rivers take the moon.
If every bird beneath the blue
In crystal air imprisoned flew,
Still on the fabled incense tree
Might men that deathless Phoenix see.

THE BLACKTHORN

Of all the flowers that fade there is no flower
Of grace like those white buds along the spears
Of blackthorn trees, in that first springtide hour
While the world's wrong is still too cold for tears :
Behind us now mid-winter months lie grey,

Michal Thorn

The fields without one daisy still, the night
Still treading close upon the starven day:
The sun, misliking, cheats us of his light
And we pace carefully, like men grown old
Without their children, down the stony ways:
We chide the season, curse the pinching cold
Of wind-borne hailstones, and our loveless days:
Then break those buds along the bitter thorn,
As on the night's dead branches buds the flower of dawn.

POSSESSIONS

The lark sprang up to praise the sun,
And sowed his joy around,
The school-boy snared him with a gin.
And caged him safe and sound.
The corn was laughing in the air
And shining to the light,
The reaper laid it with the ground
And bore it home at night.
The child's bare feet went dancing free
Beneath the dancing rain,
The mother called him to her knee
To make him hers again.

The traveller, seeing them, was blest,
But empty-handed turned to rest.

Michal Thorn

VI ET ARMIS

Battle-Horses

Hail to the valiant horses, loyal heroes,
Unheralded through centuries, their names
Unwritten on the cross-white fields of nations,
Asking no glory, making of man no claims,

Their wills the master-wills that urge them on,
As one by one a flashing column rages!
Noble defenders! Drums, be still to hear! —
Invisible hooves are charging down the ages!

Beautiful conscripts for the cause they follow,
Blindly they spill their blood in dark morasses,
Or plunge, obedient even unto torture,
And shake the roads and storm the mountain-passes.

Ah! do they ever, in a battle's lull,
Whinny in sweet remembrance of content,
Dreaming a dream of distant quiet pastures,
Of nibbling clover, free and indolent?

Steadfast and fiery, they go champing onward,
Marking defeat or victory on Time's pages.
Noble defenders! Men, do you not hear?
Invisible hooves are charging down the ages!

Agnes Lee

THE SECRET FLAME

WHO SHALL ESCAPE THE LORD?

If he be agile and alert
A man may baffle many a hurt,
If he be merry and aware
A man shall mock at many a snare.

But though he guard his continence
From siege without and hot offense,
Though he be shrewd to save his skin,
How shall he quit the foe within?

For no more shall escape a man
From this assault than fly he can
By any sudden turn or twist
The bright blood pounding in his wrist.

He still shall carry on his flight,
Unrecognized, his piteous plight
Within the core, without a name,
The ineradicable flame.

LOVE SONG

The skies are falling and poised in their fall,
The earth is riven beneath our feet,
The stars like birds with lost, shrill call
Swirl in the air where thunders beat.

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The sea is swelling, the somber tide,
Darkly arisen, towers above
Our tiny heads, and the light has died.
Here is the foothold and crevice of love.

The mad earth plunges through the night
But we lie still in a small still place
Here in the core of the furious flight,
Body to body and face to face.

THE FAITHFUL

Men acquiesce in what is not their choice.
Watching the undesired twilight fall
They mend the lamp and fire and recall
The morning sun and raise no useless voice.
At the first snowflake on the hostile air
Their hearts accept the cold, desiring
The promised summer of senescent spring.
They pass the graveyard, going to the fair
And think that they prefer the carousel;
But so did others, without great effect.
Shall these, delivered from the hopeless sod
Turn in the certitude that all is well
From the past shadow they could not reject,
Lifting their hopeful eyes in search of God?

Josephine Jacobsen

CAPRICE

The grainy earth is black and cool
Where her foot stops before the pool,
The moonlight, where the trees are thin,
Touches her skin.

At her first step the waters seize
Her warm white feet, then her white knees:
She stays to watch them waver till
The ripples still.

Now silently and without haste
The waters close about her waist
And from her flicking fingertip
The cold drops drip.

She scans the length to the far side,
Wishes the little pool were wide:
The water meets and meeting, rests
On her bright breasts.

Josephine Jacobsen

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SEQUOIAN NOTES

MEMORIES

You remember, Big Tree, the year of the hurricane —
in smoothed limb-stubs you remember it.

(The books remember it too
in a man named Washington
who is dead.)

You remember, Big Tree, the year of the changing
sun spots

and the shattering spears of fire —
in your split triumphant head you remember it.
(The books remember it too
in a man named Columbus
who is dead.)

You remember, Big Tree, the year of the bellowing fire
when you were young —

in your hidden bold black heart you remember it.
(The books remember it too
in a man named Christ
who is dead.)

LAYING ON OF HANDS

I go through the great woods slowly,
eyes at last on the ground.
With these so mortal hands
I touch the heads of young giants,

John Russell McCarthy

blessing them against wind and fire and lightning.
The heads I touch may stand among the clouds
when I am dust four thousand years.

. . . . What is this airless wind
that burns through tree and priest?

John Russell McCarthy

STEEDS

My father drives motor and aeroplane —
His father fearlessly
Drove wild horses, and Grandfather's father
Harnessed the winds of the sea.

It's good to turn a wheel and drive
Quick miles to anywhere.
It's a strange thing and a charming thing
To be a bird in the air.

But I envy Grandfather now and then.
Though he could not drive so fast,
He knew as a friend every horse he owned
And loved them all till the last.

And I envy Grandfather's father,
The god of my father's tales,
The long calm days and the quick bright storms
On the sea, with the wind in his sails.

Marjorie Knapp

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FORFEITS

On the clear afternoons that were not too cold,
We played at marbles in the dooryard there
Before the house. Your childish face was old
With indescribable cunning, your thick hair
Sandy and coarse, fell over your freckled nose
With the dry look of hair in winter weather ;
Your hands were chapped and red with cold, your toe
Taut in your shoes, your thin lips pressed together,
As I recall you, bent to that crooked ring
Scattering the colored marbles in the center.
Often you took my agates, everything
Including the painful forfeit — the sharp sting
Of that hard thumping on my knuckles, sore
With many punishments, is with me still . . .
One day I cried with fear, and forthwith then
Was lost in a country you could never enter.
You scuffed the ground with your shoes, your eyes looked
down,
You dropped your winnings at my feet, and when
I turned I saw you trudging up the hill
Doggedly whistling toward the dusky town.

Gilbert Maxwell

MANY VOICES

REMEMBERING ATLAS

Our eyes, abandoned to the night,
Have seen its wide uneasiness
Sustain the moon; we do not guess
What carnal influence of time
Opens the sky like a caress.

Shuddering from the heart's clear shell
The waves of adoration rise,
Drift through the blood, and like a bell
Struck in a peerless monotone,
Mourn from the temple of the skies.

So to the pendulous hour we cling,
While the ineluctable stars
Float their elusive vapors down
To screen our perishable eyes
Within the smoke of avatars.

But a moment, swift, electrical,
Can annihilate delight
And seal the sober reticule
Of the slow and valvular heart —
And all the brain go dry and white.

O, when the hour falls, and time

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No longer mystical becomes
A mortal and perverse event,
We shall abide in madness, numb
Beneath the pillared firmament.

THE WIDE DAY

The wide day bubbles from the sun ;
The air is white ; the hour round.
One cannot dream of this day done
And slow dark creeping from the ground.

So high the heat, so long the grass,
So deep and languorous the dust,
One cannot dream this day will pass
As all days must.

THE LOVELY CHILDREN

They shall go, with their warm faces,
The shining and resolute ones,
Down in the leafy darkness ;
They shall be with the cool stones
While slowly defiling above them
Step the inscrutable suns.

Roberta Holloway

INVITATION TO MANY VOICES

O what has tuned my ear
That far away I hear
The chanting and profound
Voices of the ground?
What ecstasy, what grief
Summons the falling leaf?
Lost from the night-world, I
Am hushed from the bell of sky,
By shelter am hemmed round
From the adoring ground.
O stars, proclaim a war!
Let noise unseal my ear
Until its hearing reach
An ultimate of speech —
That night, now low, now loud,
Cup me in ground and cloud
And all the death-host sing
The clamor of this thing.

Roberta Holloway

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POET AS FUNNY MAN

STEPHEN LEACOCK, the Walter Lippmann of comic letters, has worked over-time supplying the Americar market for whimsical prose mockery. F.P.A., the successor of our first columnist poet, Eugene Field, has become the Edgar Guest of sophisticates. Arthur Guiterman is the master of a guild whose patron saint he reveals to us. Qwertuuiop, the typewriter:

I feed her sheets of paper.
And she rhymes me things like this.

Their complete works¹ combined amount to a small library and testify to generation-long industry — the industry of the vice of sloth, that spiritual sloth whose theologic name is melancholy, a different matter from that melancholy which the great romantics whom Leonard Bacon follows made their virtue. Bacon is the only one of the lot who has got the better of English metrics; though a P.B.K. laureate, he is no columnist, no comic hack, but a poet who can not only parody but be parodied.

¹*Hellemons of Hickonomics; in Hiccoughs of Verse Done in our Social Planning Mill*, by Stephen Leacock. Dodd, Mead & Co.

The Melancholy Lute; Selected Songs of Thirty Years, by Franklin P. Adams. Viking Press.

Death and General Putnam; and 101 Other Poems, by Arthur Guiterman. E. P. Dutton & Co.

Gaily The Troubadour, by Arthur Guiterman. E. P. Dutton & Co.

The Goose on the Capitol, by Leonard Bacon. Harper & Bros.

Rhyme and Punishment, by Leonard Bacon. Farrar & Rinehart.

Poet as Funny Man

Leacock waited fifteen years to find a publisher for his first famous nonsense book. So, also, fifteen years ahead of time, did he set down in *The Unsolved Problem of Social Justice* the argument of Roosevelt's New Deal and of his own *Hellements of Hickonomics*. He teaches that Socialism will not work — double-entry bookkeeping will ruin it. He is a Fabian Socialist, that is to say a true conservative. Only a student of his Political Economy could be convinced that his satiric-sounding lines to Adam Smith's ghost are meant seriously:

How can you venture to look in the face
Of an honest fellow like Stuart Chase?
How can you dare to be blocking the way
Of an Enterprise such as the N.R.A.!

He has some mastery of prose, but in verse he makes so many silly assertions and omissions that the prose *Preface* and *Appendix* of this book overbalance and contradict the poetry. Like Shaw, he is unable to grasp on any tangible resolution of capitalist contradictions. His paradoxes are brilliant but not luminous. The mainspring of his humor is crudely fashioned and never jumps to the wise fun of Kenneth Burke's *Permanence and Change*.

Were F.P.A. less concerned to be correct, he could be funnier. His preposterous *Strange Cases* have the American tang. For instance, among other wonders he told us how when a beauty is drowning before the eyes of two men, one of whom can swim, it is the swimmer who saves her! But F.P.A. has cast the *Strange Cases* all out along with almost everything of character in his thirty-year-long book-

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shelf and has kept, together with the vulgar-materialist *Connecticut Bucolics*, only those pieces which blend with his jocose translations from Horace. These are as little comparable to Horace Gregory's translations of Catullus as F.P.A. is ill fit to scoff down the art of Amy Lowell.

There was a nickel beneath the foot during his vicious attack on free verse. Regular technique has been his only stock in trade ever since he wrote in 1902:

Concede this, harsh critic, I pray,
That though my idea is weak,
When e'er the French forms I essay
You'll find me precise in technique.

However:

Technique. The very word is like the shriek
Of outraged art. It is the idiot name
Given to effort by those who are too weak,
Too weary or too dull to play the game.
The mighty have no theory of technique,
But leave it to the blind, the halt, the lame,
"Mental non-combatants" and paralytics,
Second story men of letters and small critics.

Thus says Bacon, who has served time with the French forms himself, in his masterpiece of Spenserian stanzaic form, *PH.D.'s*.

No one more deftly than Guiterman packs just what he has to say into couplets and quatrains. But although he has written a lot, he has not a lot to say. He was all for a bigger army in 1919 and for a smaller Ku-Klux Klan—as though it mattered which! Like the hack elegants of Poe's New York, he writes not what he is taken with so much as what he thinks will take. But his uncol-

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lected *Rhymed Reviews* are the antithesis of his philosophy:

And if we still press forward
What need to know the goal?

Knowledge of the fact that the "really fine" collection in *Death and General Putnam* strikes the surprising level of competence maintained as a means by any metropolitan poetry society will save future social historians centuries of research. His *Gaily The Troubadour*, particularly the section dedicated to Dorothy Canfield Fisher, is worth a place on shelves where Longfellow, Holmes, and Lowell have slipped behind best-sellers.

The guild of Qwertyuio shows a decadence in our humor (despite the rise of sexual freedom) since the heyday of Mark Twain. Comic poetry consists in household verse, parody and satire. Good household verse requires the household; good parody requires popular laureates; good satire requires common morality. Our age is mean in these requirements. Our household poets lack households. Noyes, Milne, Millay, and Housman, even Benét, Lindsay and Sandburg, cannot fully serve parodists instead of the great Victorians, and the great Victorians are worn thin for parody. The same disparity which denies us household laureates withholds from our satirists — except the "decadent" E. E. Cummings — full measure of moral growth. Fame will require of modern clowns even greater genius than it requires of tragedians. But our clowns old and young are resigned to better-than-thou, what-fools-these-mortals-be whimsy. As Guiterman puts it:

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Still the human species blunders
On. And why? One often wonders.

Moral values in this disintegrating age must be the recreations of genius twice born and gifted to grow in grace. Such high requirement for comic poets may at first thought seem preposterous or facetious, but consideration of the Gargantuas, Brobdingnagians, Jabberwocks, and Snarks of literature, or of comic elements, whether organic or inorganic, in Dante, Shakespeare, and Blake, show that it is neither preposterous nor facetious. All art is entertainment. A poet who cannot fuse humor in his serious work is denied the grand manner, and a comedian who has not high seriousness in his entertainment flops. This is the clown's single-minded morality.

Leonard Bacon in *Animula Vagula* and *Quincebald* has given symbolic and straightforward accounts of his second birth. The World War knocked a deal of chivalric rubbish out of him, and this aryan nordic and Hun-hater now hates and baits Fascist reaction with such strength and skill that it were invidious to ask him to keep moving beyond Anti-Fascism.

He is against Hearst and for the Scottsboro boys, but, though he is not sold on Blum and Roosevelt, he looks for a Third Party "between Morgan and Morgenthau," and he is just as much against Marxism as against "communism." His strange amalgam of antipathies and enthusiasms is held together with simplicity of passion, confusion of mind, and shrewd sense. The result is an art which rises above its general type, grandiose but coarse with big clash-

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ing jumps in thought and rhyme, and with too little of such delicate delight as his "piebald sycamores." His taste is as erratic as his politics. Although he prefers Frost to Robinson, yet he prefers Brooke and Kipling to Auden and Spender, while following all four. No purification in taste alone would cause him to drop his men's-club-dinner affectations. Like all the well-bred of his generation he is too insistent upon his manliness. As with the painter, Waldo Pierce, one forever says of him that only but for this or that he would be really good, until (as when one views the recent Pierce show at the Andover Academy) on re-reading Bacon's dozen volumes since his masterpiece one sees—an honest person, an artist with moral manhood, who ranks with Cummings, Burke, and Gregory among the keen minds of our time. He is a true funny man.

John Wheelwright

THE TEST OF MATURITY

Year '48 I was immersed in Greek,
There at McKendree College, Illinois,
Poring on Homer day and night. What for?
Just for ecstasy. Is Spring to seek?
So then is Homer . . .

This unpromising beginning of Mr. Master's latest poetic work¹ has an effect as startlingly prosaic, in its context of poetic intentions, as does the bald, nasal speech of the most graceless cartooned mid-Western American in a film listened

¹The Golden Fleece of California, by Edgar Lee Masters. Farrar & Rinehart.

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to in England after a long unbroken experience of the cultivated English voice and diction. Indeed the above quotation is, for me, reminiscent of the rhyming of the local poet whose verses sometimes appeared in a newspaper in the small town in Tennessee where I was reared.

If one is able to overcome the initial discouragement, and read on, it may be conceded that a degree of genuine dignity is attained in the spare treatment of a picturesque theme, though passages distinguished in themselves are infrequent. We have had — some of us have written — novels frankly under a cinematographic influence; *The Golden Fleece of California* is cinematographic poetry. For, strangely, it is poetry, though its content-value seems strictly limited to qualities so obvious that they would lend themselves to film conveyance and little be lost. Here Mr. Masters, though he writes with some power of effect and with economy, is never at any point either below or above what is well within the grasp of the adolescent mind representative of a large section of our "movie" public. His vision of the American epic of gold, though he shows taste in the method of his narrative, reveals as it develops no significance which would not be within the compass of Cecil de Mille, who has no taste whatever and the utmost contempt for everything but magnificence.

In other words, Mr. Masters, paradoxically a figure really important in American letters, is spiritually immature — as immature as is, still, a major portion of the citizenry of our country. There is something in him typical of a generation

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— something typical of several generations — not yet disinvolved from the pioneering phase of our culture. I would not, for example, be surprised to learn that he was, actually, exceedingly erudite in certain fields of academic lore; yet the impression he produces with classical allusions intended to enhance his story is that he is still like a school-boy thrilled by aspects of the past excitingly new to himself but platitudinously familiar to his elders. This comment on a long-established writer may sound over-harsh and impertinent; and it is only just to add that, though spiritual adolescence persistent in a man whose works have been available in print for many years is a very grave fault, even such a fault carries a complementary virtue. Though his poem never glows sensuously, and does not achieve significance on the plane of intellect where maturity ought to exhibit its single advantage over youth, it is his very spiritual backwardness which leaves him responsive to the physical zest that produces adventurous living.

He is not the first poet to exploit the drama of deluded migrants daring the sumptuous, terrible West for the sake of fortune. Frank Ernest Hill's *Westward Star* was a similar performance, executed with far more lyric resource. Yet Mr. Masters (who may owe something, or may owe nothing, to the previous treatment) feels the scene with his own authentic imagining of its detail. At times his narrative is vividly simple in its projection of sensational events. But these are nowhere profoundly interpreted, and his final comment on his material:

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. . . there still remain the peaks
Of better life to gain . . .

is so very trite it is scarcely illuminating.

It may well seem to Mr. Masters that envy of the praise exclusively bestowed without stint on *The Spoon River Anthology*, which made an indelible effect on the minds of people religiously responsive to advertising, has earned him a curse of inattention for all he has written since. *The Spoon River Anthology* was really notable as the dramatic assembling of epically suggestive indigenous material. After its publication, however, he remained too easily satisfied when he could bring together the encyclopedic ingredients of a spectacle. His rationalizations, often implied, show resignation (where he attains it) no more than contentment with the obvious. He has refused to establish his intelligence in a direct contact with his own deeper experiencing of life, and has developed, in consequence, a dry repression without portent. The mills of the gods have not been allowed to work in his own being; or if they have done so unavoidably he has ignored it. On that account, he often mistakes a preliminary, conceptive stage in creative effort for full interpretive conclusion. This is a pity, for it has prevented the expansion of talented instincts—instincts still quick in him. Through an esthetic equivalent for moral cowardice, he seems to resist discarding that shallowness of extroversion most congenial to our men of action, and thus re-discovering in himself those deeper meanings of experience by which he might do justice to his own art. The English, determined

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on a similar escape, are saved from themselves by the emotional hyperesthesia they inevitably develop; it is tragic that an American who promised as much as Mr. Masters did, accepts the Peter Pan role that we, nationally, demand of our intellectuals, when for him there is plainly another aspect of things, unspoken and still imbuing him with bitterness.

Evelyn Scott

A POET, AND HIS LIFE

It is a little more than five years since Hart Crane at the age of thirty-two, after a complicated series of personal frustrations and disasters, jumped from the deck of the *Orizaba*, bound from Vera Cruz to New York, into the Caribbean where his body, diffused into those elements, has enriched imaginatively one more portion of the earth. Whether Crane was as great a poet as Mr. Philip Horton¹ thinks he was, whether Mr. Horton is right or wrong in his judgment of Crane's character and work, no writer who has studied without vanity the poetry of Hart Crane can come to any conclusion but this: that Crane brought into the poetry of our time a quality hitherto unknown, that he has made obligatory a new evaluation of his immediate predecessors, and that like Poe he will doubtless influence several generations of his successors, perhaps—again like Poe—out of all proportion to his intrinsic value.

¹*Hart Crane: The Life of an American Poet*, by Philip Horton.
W. W. Norton & Co.

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This, I think, would be enough, if there were nothing else, to establish, five years after his death, Crane's importance; and it is thus that Mr. Horton establishes it in a remarkably sound and able biography. I can think of no other poet who has been so fortunate as Crane in his first biographer. Mr. Horton has sifted a vast amount of evidence, and with great skill he has told the entire harassing story of Hart Crane. With perfect tact he has told it without offense to Crane's friends — no trifling achievement, for one of the most difficult traits of Crane's character was his genius for goading his friends into retaliatory behavior as violent and humiliating as his own. Yet a reading of the whole book gives one the distinct impression that Mr. Horton is not actually sparing anybody, least of all his subject, whose hair-raising and heart-rending history he tracks down judiciously yet remorselessly.

This is not the place to tell that story again, however, briefly: I doubt if in its main outlines it will ever be told better than Mr. Horton has told it; and I think it is fair to warn future biographers that Mr. Horton, who never saw Crane, convinces at least one person, who knew him well, of a complete and fundamental understanding of Crane's character.

Aside from the critical phase of Mr. Horton's work there is the ordinary problem of all biography, and I think that Mr. Horton has dealt with this problem more searchingly than with the critical evaluations of Crane's work. Why did Crane behave as he did? Mr. Horton has re-

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fused to see in Crane's pathetic career a Horrible Example of the hostility of capitalist society to the arts, though this indeed is part of the story; he takes issue with those commentators who at the time of Crane's death saw in it the whole story. Here and there in Mr. Horton's pages, however, one detects the quite natural wish that Crane's family had been more harmonious and sympathetic: the family portrait is one of unrelieved tension and gloom cast upon a background of prosperous Philistia—the familiar, frustrating *milieu* of the American artist. Yet, given Crane's monstrous egoism, grievously aggravated by homosexuality, his infantile preoccupation with himself, the sentimental conviction of the sanctity of his own experience because it was his—given all this, one must conclude that Crane would have been frustrated and destroyed in any human society that we have any record of; and in any classical society, like that of fifth-century Athens, a society occasionally still involved as the perfect *milieu* for the artist, it is not likely that a man like Crane could have become a poet at all. In order to see in Crane's personal disaster and the fragmentary character of his work a full indictment of the society in which he lived, one must accept the most extreme tenet of romanticism, which ends up by asserting that society ought to exist primarily for art.

Mr. Horton does not go that far. In fact, his careful summary of the causes that led to Crane's suicide is a model of intelligence and good sense:

After tracing the course of his life and particularly the swift

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decline of the last years, beginning with the fall of 1927, there should be little need to insist upon the complex and organic character of his suicide. One may see it either as an escape from a society in which he had no function or from a psychic impasse which had no solution, one may see it morally as the violent issue of debauchery or, mystically, as the last desperate effort to achieve a transcendent unity through his favorite symbol, the sea; or finally, one may take a more general and inclusive view of it, such as the one so constantly stressed in these pages—namely, the lack of security, both spiritual and worldly, which, like an interior cavity hollowed by fear, distorted the surfaces and substrata of his life with fatal displacements.

If I understand Mr. Horton's rather confused metaphor at the end of this passage, I subscribe fully to his analysis; yet I feel that one of the effects of this insecurity—which is surely the key to Crane's life—Mr. Horton fails to bring out sufficiently. In spite of Crane's professed belief in the high mission of the poet, a rôle that he attempted with great heroism to play, he never had any deep confidence in the significance of his own work or in the arts as a whole. I say this out of memories of long intimacy with him. In so far as American life and standards undid him, they did their evil work not through the "environment" but through Crane himself. This struggle within him was one phase of a single struggle that harassed him upon every plane of his life.

How did this complex personal problem affect his work? Mr. Horton is inclined to think it affected it very little, since of his "recurrent obsessions and constant dissipations" he says that "he recognized them honestly and clearly understood their causes." In a sense he did recognize and understand them, but at the deeper level of artis-

A Poet, and His Life

tic creation they remained unfaced and unsolved. And this brings us to Mr. Horton's evaluation of the poetry which seems to me not so extravagant as improperly stated. Mr. Horton frequently steps into the pitfall awaiting every literary biographer who closely traces the connection between the life and the poetry: Having derived Crane's intention with a certain poem, for example *For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen*, he tends to see the poem as the perfection of the intention; but the poem, in spite of its brilliantly written passages, remains a juvenile work.

One final disagreement with Mr. Horton and I shall be done with ingratitude to a careful and, as biographies go, wholly successful book. The discussion of *The Bridge* seems to me to miss the point of much of the recent criticism of that poem: Mr. Horton dismisses it as demanding of the poem "some cure-all"—the terms in which Crane himself dismissed it — some panacea, political or social. As a matter of fact, that is precisely what Crane wanted the poem to be and that is why, in its total structure and effect, it is not a success. After Crane had tried to put greater pressure of meaning upon a trivial symbol than it would bear, he was thrown back upon the "recurrent obsessions" lying too deep for analysis; he was alone again with his personal problem, a solution of which he had not found in terms of his art; nor had he discovered that no such solution might be possible. Had he discovered this, the romantic sentimentalism of the "bridge" symbol

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would have seemed inadequate at the outset. It is well that it did not seem inadequate, unless we may assume that he could have got a better symbol; for without it American literature would be the less rich for the absence of the magnificent fragments in *The Bridge*.

Allen Tate

REVIEWS

VARIATIONS ON A THEME

Biography for Traman, by Winfield Townley Scott. Covici-Friede.

Although we do not expect a first book of verse to exhibit the same level of achievement as a *Collected Poems*, we may legitimately ask that it supply a valid *raison d'être*. Poetry may be its own excuse for being, but that does not mean that, merely because it has been wrapped in poetic form, any idea or sentiment, no matter how uninformed, pointless or frivolous, is worth consideration. A serious reader of verse is a person seriously concerned with problems of human life and conduct, just as poetry itself, in the last analysis, is concerned with these problems. Such a reader quite properly demands of a young poet that his verse embrace—in its own terms, of course—an awareness of society and of the human predicament; that it contain, at least in embryo form, those qualities which are the attributes of the mature writer.

This first book of verse by Winfield Scott merits attention because, while it does not meet these demands as fully as one may wish, it does represent an attempt to do so. Mr.

Variations on a Theme

Scott, it is evident, is a sensitive man with a respect for his medium that is auspiciously combined with a genuine effort to grapple with the urgencies of his age. For him the writing of verse has grown out of a need to give order to his thoughts and perceptions, to find the "truth of this time" and within it an individual integrity and purpose. Like his protagonist, Traman, Mr. Scott is one of

These passionate ones who would befriend
Some truth and wear it to the grave:

.
Contrive in dark a light to save.

These lines define the underlying theme of the sequence that comprises the book and gives it its title. Each of the poems enunciates some feeling, idea, or mood related either directly or by inference to this central theme. Together they form a record of the emotional, intellectual, and spiritual development of Traman, who is presented as a representative member of the generation born at the outbreak of the World War. The certitude and calm that marked his boyhood are contrasted with the frustration, doubt, loneliness, and boredom of the post-War period through which he passed on his way to manhood. What differentiates Traman from his predecessors, Senlin and Sweeney, to whose creators Mr. Scott is obviously and not always too happily indebted, is his arduous struggle toward some kind of affirmation. The nature of the affirmation finally attained is perhaps best indicated in *Soliloquy*, the next to the last poem in the book, where the poet concludes with Traman:

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There is no quarrel between the sun and death.
I have heard the black drums in the sun, but always
The singing horns of light above the drums.

So let my ears be intimate of that pulse.

This is enough, to be
Not lost at last, but only turned again
Surely, wholly in the great tides of light.

The disconcerting vagueness of this affirmation, its fundamental irrelevance and even avoidance of the problems posed in the preceding pages, justifies the observation that Mr. Scott has led his readers out of the waste land only to precipitate them into the bottomless pit of irresponsible mysticism. Moreover, it accounts largely for the failure of the sequence as a whole, and at the same time provides the measure of the author's present limitations, though it does not detract from the excellence of certain individual poems such as *Summer Afternoon*, *Where Ignorant Armies*, and *Antarctic from New England*—poems that reveal Mr. Scott's discriminating sensibility and feeling for cadence and language to decided advantage.

T. C. Wilson

LEAVE THE LEAF ITS SPRINGTIME

New Poems, by Frederick Mortimer Clapp. Harper & Bros.

If you are one of those readers who feel that there can be far more poetry in a compact definition than in the over-expansion of an image, I believe you will continually find eventfulness in Clapp's *New Poems*. Clapp can demarcate situations with scholastic compression. "Luxor lies ruins,"

Leave the Leaf Its Springtime

he writes, in his poem *Peering at Pharaohs*— and I don't see how you could do more with that. The two initial *l*'s, the two final hard *s*'s, with the middle monosyllabic word, as bridge, combining both — that seems to me gratifying, workmanlike language. It is the kind of accomplishment Clapp has often.

With such stylistic equipment he goes forth to encounter danger; at which point we must introduce our "however." (If one wanted a 'scutcheon for the family tree of modern thought, I propose as heraldic legend that strange device, *Néanmoins*.) Clapp's economy of production has its attendant rigor ("rigor" as in "rigor mortis"). One is led to speculate on the difference between an Egyptian, looking at an Egyptian mummy when Egyptian culture was alive, and ourselves looking at the mummy in a museum now, when its culture is dead. The poet, viewing the archaeological object under glass hears outside an aeroplane; he imagines "the steep spiral climb / Of that mechanic hawk." By varying incantatory entrances, each firmly constructed, he returns us to the same uneasy mood, such feeling perhaps as one might get on leaving the traffic-laden streets on a hot summer day and entering a cool, dark church (someone else's church).

There are fears that one dare not confront, lest he be turned to stone. They are a Gorgon's head. But if he makes for himself a stylistic mirror, he can observe the monster thus reflected — and he is not rigidified. The unexpected bottleneck in the economy of such production is this: It is when

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the poet is *not* viewing Gorgon's heads in the protective mirror of his style, it is *then* that he is turned to stone. Or, translated: Our present poet can contemplate death with mastery; it does not freeze him; but when he holds his ingenuous mirror up to *life*, he becomes petrified. He has an obol for crossing Acheron (even our great assertive steamships become her "Acherontic liners") — but he passes out this obol constantly, which is a punishment.

Within these contextual limits, Clapp's naming is expert. Here are, cautiously appraising,

clear cold eyes
That make of me an alien.

The strict inventory discloses that days were spent "in a grass-fire of activity." The sexual act serves for "defying the Macrocosm." He observes how

new astronomic ice ages set in
and new conventions of original sin.

As I became formed to the pattern, towards the end of his book I noted a poem entitled *Birth*. On the basis of past evidence, I ventured: "Somehow this birth will be a dying." Partially, the poet outwitted me. He treats, with delicacy, of an opening leaf. He gets us to opening with it. But he rounds out the matter thus:

Why does it tremble so on its stem?
Is it, its fulness found,
Tugging in an ecstasy of vitality still unconsumed
Towards disembodiment?

I felt that one should try hard to leave the leaf its spring-time. However, the taking-away can be done in slovenly

Leave the Leaf Its Springtime

fashion or well. And Clapp often does it very well — positively, assertively, by scrupulous stylistic building.

Kenneth Burke

FIRST DISCOVRIES

Encounter in April, by May Sarton. Houghton, Mifflin Co.

To read any book of first poems is to be present at a program of impersonations. It is the devotee's peculiar pleasure to name each mime correctly, to estimate the skill in the mimicry, to catch the moment when the performer's ability exceeds his mask and the individual, the new person is revealed. *Encounter in April* affords ample opportunity for these enjoyments to those who have been interested in Miss Sarton's scattered publications here and in England.

The reason that a young writer is so often acting the part of an older one is because a poet's prime difficulty is to keep skin-close to the feelings and thoughts that are his own and at the same time to use only that segment of the world's vocabulary which experience has actually vitalized for him. We would either have fuller selves to communicate than we do, or we would have smoother styles than are rightfully ours.

Thus a good part of Miss Sarton's poems are love sonnets, the best of which are perhaps the first and fourth in the sequence whose title the book bears. But to achieve the high polish which these sonnets possess it has been necessary for the poet to employ a good many pre-fabricated emotions, just as the sonnet form itself lends a ready-made gloss to the verse. The result is that the whole performance inevitably

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calls up Millay, *et. al.*, in their second April moods, and Miss Sarton's sonnets seem to stem from literary rather than personal emotions.

The free, unrhymed lines of the poems in the middle sections of the book are somehow much more effective. This is not a derogation of metrical forms, though how to make a sonnet a poem rather than just another sonnet is one of the most baffling poetic problems there is. These less rigid poems (such as *Japanese Papers*), because of a lack of sufficient composition in language and mood, can also come to nothing, drifting away rather than remaining like perfectly cut agates in the mind. But such poems as *The Trees* —

beech and laburnum, saffron fountains,
the candled chestnut, ballerina elms
all ascension lifting up of flowers:

and *Kew* —

The people-choruses wander down avenues of operatic grass
compose themselves into the long perspective of the trees —

show an eye at once simple and sophisticated, individual in its observations and feminine in the sense that Edith Sitwell and D. H. Lawrence are such.

The finest piece of work in every way is a lyric in ten fluid parts, *She Shall Be Called Woman*. Its theme is a girl's first putting-on ("a shift, And she was trying it for the first time") of her mature body ("this shape of a pear, This heaviness of a curving fruit"). There is a delicate physiological nearness here that recalls Kay Boyle's best prose.

First Discoveries

She looked down
at the naked hand
and wept.
the mesh
the exquisite small hairs
this delicate savage
this was her hand,
a present someone had given her.

One remembers the boy Yeats jumping over a stick between two chairs each morning in his bedroom, delighting in the supple wonder of his new-found body. This genuine sensibility and emotional necessity motivating Miss Sarton's poem impart to the lines an "unresistant, completely rhythmical" form which is beautiful and satisfying in every way.

This poem seems to me to reveal that secret access that women have into the core of their sensations and feelings. And it is certainly from that heightened consciousness that their best and unique work always comes. It is to be hoped that Miss Sarton's future writing will take its departure from this point.

Sherman Conrad

TIME CONFRONTED

Time Has No Shadow, by Katherine Garrison Chapin. Dodd, Mead & Co.

The final effect of this collection of poems is one of an eager personal philosophy. Not that the poet's technique is negligible; it is on the contrary both responsive and competent, but it is submerged. The tricks of expression by which many writers gain attention are supplanted here by devices

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of viewpoint, by unexpected and individual turns of thought. The reader feels the impress of a keen intelligence at work upon the major problem implied by the title, the nature of time and its effect upon the human entity.

Proust conceived of time as a substance, an essence, an almost tangible material in which the items of memory stood suspended, undissolved. Miss Chapin works from the same direction, but portrays the impotence of time in the presence of memory, its inability to efface the things men leave behind them. More than the usual volume of disparate verses, written at varying intervals and under changing circumstances, these poems move forward with a steady pace toward a definite conclusion. Time has no shadow. It cannot obliterate the "long-remembered light."

As for the poetic method used, the first of the series will serve to illustrate: *Stonehenge* is a subject which has been often approached, but always from the present backward. Miss Chapin reached her conclusions by going back of the cause and looking forward. She becomes for the moment of writing one of those "men bent down with sand and blood in their eyes," who labored to build a monument which time could not destroy, and who succeeded. From the same vantage-point she has written other poems, *Greek Column at Nimes*, and *Secret* (The Van Gogh Exhibition).

the great will be remembered, and in moments that make plain
their passions, not alone
the vast symphony, the large, impressive canvas,
the piled eloquence of stone . . .

* * * * *

Time Confronted

and you, Vincent, in your field of grass,
Each blade a knife-edge, each color a spear,
Your secret revealed, naked, breath-takingly clear.

Such poems are too diffuse to represent Miss Chapin's talent at its best, however. When she directs her attention to language rather than to philosophy she is able to produce poems like *Sails in the Distance*, one of the finest in the book:

No bird-note slides from the motionless dry tree,
The words I write are whispered, paper words
The flowers stand waxen, stiff
In the garden hollow.
Must a long thought end in if?
And no answer follow?
Must the wind swoon
Like this still afternoon?
Across the distance, cutting the pale sea
A tall white schooner swings;
Turns till the masts are one clear line;
Leans till the curved sail fill,
And passes, urged by the steady will
Of a strong wind blowing clear,
That blows not now, not here.

The dilemma is finally solved by setting up an image of timelessness and immortality, not in the usual sentimental fashion, but by means of the mention of a long succession of enduring things, great music, great art, the invincible spirit of man, the unforgotten dead. Almost she convinces the reader, but if she fails it is partly because, in the reading, time has become too real to be denied. *J. N. N.*

DEFECTIVE SINCERITY

Straight or Curly? by Clifford Dyment. London: J. M. Dent & Sons.

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Clifford Dyment is interested in sincerity, in not saying more than he actually feels, in being direct and modest. Such an intention is obviously admirable, but the difficulty of fulfilling it may be underestimated. Thus the fourth poem in this book begins:

In the windows of shipping companies
I see the perfect model ships.
Oh, for strange countries! But they are leagues away,
Locked, like a song behind shut lips.

There is little to indicate that Mr. Dyment is very much aware of strange countries and is capable of setting forth this awareness in fresh and moving terms. Some of these poems are full of good perceptions and interesting feelings, such as "Gloved hands are blind," and (of a fox) "Exploiter of shadows," and "The pen's wild dog," and "The truth curled hidden under tongues." These occur as parts of poems in which their effect is, for the most part, dissipated by the lax mildness in which the whole poem is written. It is a failure of tone — the voice attempting to be direct, simple, and unpretentious is merely weak — and thus it is a metrical failure.

Yeats, in his recent anthology, presents a lucid example of metrical control which bears directly upon the verse Dyment is trying to write. Yeats is speaking of how Bridges can use the most commonplace figures and yet achieve a magnificent whole, by using some trick of speeding up or slowing down the movement of the verse. This explanation is too general, but we can make it specific by examining the two lines of Bridges which Yeats quotes:

Defective Sincerity

A glitter of pleasure
And a dark tomb.

The spondee of "dark tomb," which halts the quasi-anapestic quickness of the preceding syllables, is clearly responsible for the way in which the meter has "reflected" the meanings; while, to begin with, the meanings have "characterized" the rhythm. (It is important to add this last clause, or the expressiveness of meter is easily caricatured: John Crowe Ransom, in the *Spring Southern Review*, attacks this kind of analysis when it is indeed ridiculous; but if we remember that the meaning "circumscribes" the rhythm to begin with, then to take Keats' "Silent, upon a peak in Darien" and quote Gogarty's parody, "Potent, behind the cart with Mary Ann" in order to show that the meter is not expressive — Ransom uses like examples — is to miss the reciprocal determination which is involved.) We ought, then, to compare the example from Bridges with the following statement in one of Dyment's poems:

Here is no hope
Of the quick and daring;
Here the forsaken
Dead and dying.

No reader will believe this hopelessness, couched, as it is, in the feminine endings, intended as assonance, of the second and fourth lines, and with the hurrying trochees which begin three of the four lines.

But this general defect can be illustrated again, in reverse, by quoting an example in Dyment himself where the perceptions have really been fixed by the meter and there is no contradiction of rhythm and meaning:

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The creature tense with wildness
Knows death is sudden falling
From fury into weary
Surrendering of feeling.

It is precisely the sensitivity revealed in such lines which makes one aware of the gaps elsewhere.

Delmore Schwartz

COMMENT

On Wednesday evening, May 26th, there was held at the Arts Club of Chicago a dinner commemorating the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of POETRY. This charming occasion was attended by seventy friends and associates of the magazine, citizens of Chicago who gathered to pay tribute to POETRY's quarter-century of continuous publication, its achievements in the world of literature, the ideals and labors of Harriet Monroe, and the contribution made by her journal to the cultural life of Chicago and America. Mr. Ford Madox Ford, the distinguished novelist, poet, and editor, was an honored guest of the evening, and the party included such members of the Chicago community as Charles H. Hamill, POETRY's oldest staff-member, who has served on the Administrative Committee since the first volume; Mrs. William J. Calhoun of Peiping, China, Mr. William S. Monroe, Mr. and Mrs. Edwin S. Fether, and other members of Miss Monroe's family; Professors Robert Morss Lovett, Gordon J. Laing, and Percy H. Boynton of the University; Mr. Henry J. Patten, Dr. J. H. and Mrs. Marion Strobel Mitchell, Mrs. Margaret Ayer Barnes, Mrs. Inez Cunningham Stark, Mrs. Frances Shaw, Miss Joanna Fortune, Mr. and Mrs. Walter Brewster, the present editorial staff-members of POETRY, and others who have shared by editorial work, contributions, or practical encouragement in POETRY's history.

In his after-dinner remarks, Mr. Ford paid tribute to POETRY's long and courageous service to the cause of literature. After narrating some of his own experiences in promoting the welfare of modern writers in London, Paris, and New York, particularly in connection with his two brilliant magazines, *The English Review* in London before the War and *The Transatlantic* in Paris after it, Mr. Ford said that "POETRY is Chicago's greatest asset in the

Comment

world of international letters, its one distinct and unrivalled contribution to the good state of contemporary culture. Wherever a poet writes a poem, whether in Yorkshire or Oregon or Australia, he knows there is only one place to send it for a fair and intelligent hearing, and that is to the little magazine in Chicago across whose cover the Pegasus leaps. Without such steadfast and sacrificing labors as POETRY has demanded of its founder and editors, the condition of our civilization would lapse — even more swiftly than certain forces are at present making it lapse — into violence, stupidity, and savagery. At this moment particularly, when murder is one of the few active inspirations in the human heart, it takes an organ like POETRY to keep alive a higher and nobler kind of inspiration. What POETRY requires annually for its future security is less than it takes to fire off one cannon in a battle, to slaughter a battalion or annihilate a city, and it should be part of Chicago's and America's pride in POETRY's high honor that they will see to it that the magazine is preserved for at least another quarter-century of labor on behalf of the highest motives of the human mind, the cause of cultural peace and well-being, and the dignity of civilization."

Other speakers of the evening — Professor Lovett, Mr. Hamill, Dr. Laing, Mrs. Barnes — seconded this tribute, some by recalling memories of POETRY's adventurous beginnings in 1912 and of Miss Monroe's friendships, others by emphasizing POETRY's valiant persistence through twenty-five years of disorder and uncertainty, and its survival as the only purely literary journal of recognized distinction in America. All of them urged the participation of the citizens of Chicago in POETRY's birthday celebration next October and in its future security. One of POETRY's oldest supporters, Mr. S. O. Levinson of Chicago, who founded the Levinson Prize in 1914, was prevented by illness from attending, but his telegram which ended by saying that while "Washington has its political Monroe Doctrine, Chicago has a poetic Monroe Doctrine which is just as truly a source of national pride," was one of the most applauded tributes of the evening.

Another recent tribute to POETRY took the form of a Twenty-fifth Anniversary Exhibition in the Poetry Room of the library of Harvard University. Here, from May 22nd to June 5th, were displayed past and present volumes of the magazine, some of its most distinguished publications, books by authors first introduced in its pages, and editorials marking the ideals and battles of the maga-

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zine. The *Boston Evening Transcript*, in reporting the exhibition, said: "In 1912 POETRY was founded by Harriet Monroe as an unprejudiced organ to encourage poetry of all types showing intrinsic merit. For twenty-four years—until her death last fall—Miss Monroe introduced to the reading public most of the outstanding poets of the period. In spite of numerous financial crises she always paid liberally for contributions and always had her ledger in the black at the end of the year. The magazine is the chief factor in the resurrection of popular interest in poetry, for the art was in a sad state in America in the early nineteen hundreds. Today POETRY is the foremost journal of its type in the world. In spite of this, the continuation of its publication is an open question, depending on financial support."

We have received another item from the *Boston Transcript* of several months ago, in which POETRY's career was reviewed. From it we venture to quote a few remarks: "Everyone knows that the oldest and finest magazine in the United States devoted wholly to poetry is the little orange-covered monthly issued for the last twenty-five years from Chicago, 232 East Erie Street is to hundreds and hundreds of American poets the most famous street number in the country. Sooner or later every poet worth his salt, or some day to be worth it, has sent poems to that address, and the best of them have been accepted and printed. Most poets, too, buy the magazine to find out what is really being written, and to read the sharp and clear-eyed criticism of published volumes that fills the rearward pages. No one who pretends to the love of living poetry should be without it, and few are. . . . It is almost impossible to say too strongly that all who believe in or read or write poetry in these days should help to the utmost to see that POETRY lives another quarter century. . . . There should be enough people in the United States of America to assure through gifts, through regular annual subscriptions, through writing poetry, and through faith in Miss Monroe's vision, the continuance of the oldest and strongest magazine of poetry the United States has ever known."

Miss Elizabeth Bishop, of New York, but at present traveling in Ireland and France, was graduated from Vassar College in 1934. Her verse has appeared in *Trial Balances* (where it was accompanied by an appreciation by Marianne Moore), in *Life and Letters Today*, *The Forum*, *New Directions*, and several other journals.

Notes on Contributors

Mr. Harris Downey, of Baton Rouge, La., is in the English Department of the Louisiana State University, and has contributed verse and prose to *The Southern Review*, *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, and other periodicals.

Miss Roberta Halloway, of Berkeley, Cal., has published verse and prose in *The Nation*, *The Saturday Review*, *Books*, and other magazines. She is now studying for her doctorate at the University of California.

Josephine W. B. Jacobsen (Mrs. Eric J.), lives at Homeland, near Baltimore. Miss Marjorie Knapp lives in Boston. "Michal Thorn" is the pseudonym of a young English poet.

Mr. Robert Friend, born in Brooklyn in 1913 and graduated from Brooklyn College in 1934, has lately been working for the WPA as a teacher of Remedial Reading, and conducting an experiment in teaching the writing of verse to young children.

The other poets of this issue have previously appeared in *Poetry*.

Mr. Winfield Townley Scott, of Providence, R. I., a graduate of Brown University, and a member of the literary staff of the *Providence Journal*, published this year his first book of verse, *Biography for Traman* (Covici-Friede), reviewed in this issue. In 1935 he won the Guarantors' Prize in *Poetry*. He has also contributed critical reviews to these pages.

Mr. Edmund Wilson, of New York, is now living near Stamford, Conn. He is well known for his literary criticism, particularly in *Axel's Castle* (1931), and for his literary editorship of *The New Republic*, 1926-30. His most recent book is a collection of three plays, *This Room and This Gin and These Sandwiches* (containing *The Crime in the Whistler Room*, *A Winter in Beech Street*, and *Beppo and Beth*), just issued in the New Republic Dollar Series; these describe "three successive stages in the post-War artistic and moral revolt." He is also preparing a history of modern socialist theories of history, *To the Finland Station*. His earlier verse has appeared in *Poets, Farewell!* (Scribners, 1929.)

Agnes Lee (Mrs. Otto Freer), of Chicago, is an old contributor to *Poetry* and the author of five books of verse: *Verses for Children* (1898), *The Border of the Lake* (1910), *The Sharing* (1914), *Faces and Open Doors* (1922), and *New Lyrics* (1930), as well as of translations of Gautier's *Emaux et Camées* (1903) and Gregh's *La Maison de l'Enfance* (1907).

Mr. Harold Rosenberg, of New York, was an editor of *The New Act*, an experimental literary journal, and has contributed verse

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and criticism to *POETRY*, *The Symposium*, *The Partisan Review*, and other magazines. Mr. William Stephens, of Gary, Ind., is a journalist.

Mr. Gilbert Maxwell, of New York City, is the author of *Look to the Lightning* (1934) and *Stranger's Garment* (1936), both published by Dodd, Mead & Co. Mr. John Russell McCarthy, of La Crescenta, Cal., first appeared in *POETRY* in 1914.

BOOKS RECEIVED

ORIGINAL VERSE*

- Poems 1929-1936*, by Dudley Fitts. New Directions, Norfolk, Conn.
Not Alone Lost, by Robert McAlmon. New Directions.
Country Men, by James Hearst. Prairie Press, Muscatine, Iowa.
Hounds on the Mountain, by James Still. Viking Press.
Songs of Joy, by W. H. Davies. Bruce Humphries, Boston.
Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, edited with notes by Robert Bridges and Charles Williams. Oxford University Press. (Cheap edition: Oxford Bookshelf.)
The Maid of Orleans, by Kerr Rainsford. Macmillan Co.
Ornament of Honor, by E. H. R. Altounyan. Macmillan Co.
American Frontier, by Elisabeth Peck. Doubleday, Doran.
Sonnets in a Hospital, by Merrill Bishop. Golden Hind Press, Madison, N. J.
The Unbeautiful Spear, by Sheldon Christian. Carra-Christian, Brunswick, Maine.
Earth Grace, by Christine Hamilton Watson. Henry Harrison.
Drifting Petals, by Hazel Dillon Harney. Henry Harrison.
Star-Haunted, by Gordon LeClaire. Henry Harrison.
The Abundance of Life, by Margaret Alexander Wheeler. Dorrance & Co.
Le Brasier Mystique, by Armand Godoy. Bernard Grasset, Paris.
- PROSE, AN ANTHOLOGY, AND TRANSLATIONS:
- Hart Crane: The Life of an American Poet*, by Philip Horton. W. W. Norton & Co.
- Realization, A Philosophy of Poetry*, by Hugh McCarron, S. J. Sheed & Ward.
- Forward from Liberalism*, by Stephen Spender. Random House.
- Twelve Poets of the Pacific*, ed. by Yvor Winters. New Directions.
- The Agamemnon of Aeschylus*, translated by Louis MacNeice. Harcourt, Brace & Co.

POETRY: A MAGAZINE OF VERSE

calls the attention of its friends, subscribers, and contributors to the ways in which they may assist the magazine in achieving a new security, and in celebrating its coming Twenty-fifth Anniversary by planning on another quarter-century of literary distinction and discovery:

1. Subscriptions to the Guaranty Fund are earnestly solicited. These may be of \$50 or more, annually, and are the chief means of insuring the permanent security of the magazine.
2. Supporting Subscriptions of \$10 a year will be welcomed.
3. Regular Subscriptions are desired, especially in groups, from individuals, schools, libraries, study clubs, classes, and literary societies. Our *Special Anniversary Rate* is now in force (see next page) and subscribers may avail themselves of a reduced price on subscriptions extending over a three-year period.

If the art of poetry is to prosper, it must have its fair share of the patronage and benefits which are lavished so freely on the other arts.

One American newspaper editor has said: "When I think of the millions that go to the aid of music, and the enormous bequests and heavy prizes in the art world — and nothing for poetry — I question whether we have intelligent patrons of the fine arts. . . . A dozen or so of the distinctive poems printed in POETRY did more to change the face of American literature in this period than thousands of ballyhooed novels done in the same years."

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OVER

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The Cover Designed by Eric Gill

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Poetry

A Magazine of Verse

VOL. L
No. V

AUGUST 1937

THE UNERRING FLOWER

PARDON FOR WEEDS

For Gregory

IT IS the kinship only we deny
To say the angel's wings do not exist
When in his arms we wrestle — should a cry,
Disturbing heaven's solitude, persist.

So in the absence of the gardener
Grow the shy religions of our weeds,
Rooted in the heart that heeds
Fertile neglect, like rain, a pardoner.

Tendrils must flourish if the soil is rich. . .
This pride that covers us with peace of vines
Springs up colossal

(On each stalk a niche
For wrested wings —

the symbol!)

When new lines
Appear in leaves like anguished hints of one
Unerring flower that shall subdue the sun.

POETRY: A Magazine of Verse

SUMMER IS A CHILD IN A GLASS TOWER

Protected from the winds
Whose head nods
And eyelids close . . .
Close half-way

But he must stay awake
For below move the watchers
Who sleep not yet

Sorrow is like summer.
Yet were he set
In the highest niche
Of the clearest wall
To which I lead,
Would sleep withdraw
When summer entered
Or sorrow slumber
Errorless as summer?

So this new clearness
That we but half remember
Opens at the edge
Ready to break —

O tower,
Keep the children cool
For they must stay awake
And guide our ways through hours
Errorless with sorrows!

Paul Eaton Reeve

POEM

It was otherwise in our provided cribs
Where innocence with deadly skill prolonged
The primal warmth. One could go back to sleep
And dream the complicated myths, each one
Caught up again, remembered as if lost
Where cries are answered by the milk of will;

Those were the centuries when someone sang
On slight acquaintance with his heart awash.
Questions entailed no answer: Guarded by priests
Who questioned to the ever-burning leaves,
Followed their desire while downward curled
The smoke of judgment into credulous eyes,
Enduring without wonder wondering.

But, love, the long night's over and the skies
Pluck at our severed lashes — we must wake.

The senses and the world they use cry out
For truest utterance in what impends:
Now we must enter clearly their clear world,
Day and desire. The calculated grasp
That held strange patterns to our eyes is weak.

No light shall rise from yonder equal bush
And beckon while we bend to intercept,
No centuries forgive our perishing
Loyal to blood that makes unwilling hands
If we should perish, sink under darkened sheets.

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MAN INTO BEAST

If I rejoin, my brothers, then am I
As free as those who watch on summer nights
Beneath the awnings of a slack desire.

They shall not hear me chatter from the trees
Because my jungle is apart, and prayer
Steals slowly out of lattices, too weak
To smooth the twigs beneath my hurrying feet!

When all outside of us the eyes of men
Whose glance I have no power to meet
Concealing in their arc the unalive
Dream sinewed, make their choice, nor enter here

Where every leaf is ambushed, every spike
Conceived in equal malice by the sky
And undevoured backs of snakes alike
Prepare for our least falterings, shall I
Foretell a moon when awnings disappear:

And you will see, when you have felt despair
Growing upon your hands in spite of prayer,
A secret sky, shall scent the naked hide
Of memories you may no more divide . . .

A moon of skill — before whose thrusts what whim
Shall shelter you? What wall of will? — too thin
To stay the beasts of fable when they rise,
Leaves trembling in the gleam of tiger eyes

Paul Eaton Reeve

Through every jungle door you closed, made strong
By suffering such as mine to know their wrong —

And will your awnings linger?

OUTGOING

More flora! From our blankets dim
With promise of the distances to come,
We watched the bawdy-hearted thunder strum
Upon the banjo clouds —

and knew our land
All of it, palms rising above lagoons
To terminate in gas-pumps, postal cards
To heaven and thanksgivings —

These were the shawls
We gathered from the trees let down by night
When stars slipped gently by our folded knees
To cover us and mother us:

Your lips moved first
(Touching my quiet hand)

I turned and saw
The bulging night about us like a sack,
Each thing we looked on that my sight turned black

Your eyes that fled the waves . . .
and hugged the sand!

Paul Eaton Reeve

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PUBLIC GARDEN

NO OTHER BELL

Doubt is the bell that hangs above my portal,
Doubt is the tolling that the night brings on —
The gate fades where it is, the view is gone,
But dawn will show it there — it is immortal.

Its clapper sounds again when birds are still,
Again its outlines show. Come nearer,
The gateway where it hangs will soon be clearer,
The landscape will be there beyond the grille:

The daisies scattered white upon a meadow,
The sand that slides into a tranquil sea —
If these are waking dreams, and they may be,
If all that sunlight is indeed a shadow,

No actual meadow there, no sea, no sand —
The doubt was all I had that could be given
Who have no other bell above my heaven,
Who only know this dubious Holy Land.

Marion Strobel

FOR MY FATHER

Oh glint of gold within the leaden reef,
Oh water running with a crystal quiver,
Diamond and metal, rock and river,
Teach me a way like yours to keep my grief.

That it may have the value of its cause —
Unfathomed like the mineral under water,
The gold in stone — teach me, his troubled daughter,
To keep it reticent as his life was.

PUBLIC GARDEN

Between the twilight and the dark
Where tulips are like candles lit,
Along with others, we shall sit
And watch the peacocks in the park.

Above the words that we withhold
That are the voiceless part of this
Feathered and perfumed artifice —
Above the petals as they fold

To darker purple in the green
Of this transparent twilit hour,
Above the peacock and the flower —
Love, the stripped olive branch, is seen.

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NORTH EAST WIND

A north east wind is touching tired men,
They lift their eyes in wonder,
Over the bridge and under
The light grows alien.

A tug is purple that before was gray,
The sunless arch is brighter,
Seagulls are whiter, whiter —
Disquieted as they,

The men have straightened in the freshening air.
They see, instead of danger,
This clarity that's stranger
Than any new despair:

A substance in the distances they scan,
And on the bridge and nearer,
Approaching them and clearer
The wonder that is Man.

Marion Strobel

ENDS FOR SILENCES

POEM

He that thinks he holds the sky
Within the fabric of his eye,
Or marks in symbols on a page
The depth of youth, the scars of age,
Will one day wake to find that he
Is straitly bound by mystery.

The cloth will wear away and show
The sky beyond in afterglow ;
And what he writes will dimly scan
The folly of fallacious man.
But the long sky will stretch until
It snares him in a narrow hill.

FORAY

Two things are pencilled on my sight —
A lark ascending and a kite.
I watch the lark, all stringless, free —
Scarce sense the boy in front of me.
Then a great bird supines the sky
And far below a butterfly.
The kite is weaving in the wind,
The lark is soar and cleft and bend ;
It up and upward sails, then sinks —

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(Is it the boy or I that thinks?)
The little butterfly is caught
By the small lark — the string is taut!
The great bird drops its silent dread
Upon the lark's too tiny head.
Hardly a sound — it was so quick.
(The boy has dropped his kiting-stick.)
The great bird fades into a spot
With the small lark that now is not.
But while he soars the kite is lost,
(The boy is crying for the cost.)
It tears to senseless tatters where
I watch this foray in the air.

DECOR

The thought of you is a long line running
Indelibly through every movement of my brain.
You are drawn in geometric circles everywhere,
Straight lines, at tangent, trace your loveliness
Against the sky and past elliptic hills.

Hours and hours I have watched the wide arcs
Suffer sea-change to swelling breasts
And white limbs dancing.

Rolf Adriansen

DESERT NIGHT

A footfall
Would be ecstasy
In this cold silent space,
A jangling leaf
A mystery,
A cat's warm peaked face
A monument
To history.

Rolf Adriansen

LAND BIRDS BY THE SEA

No pelican on the sea-black gathering upward air and long
propulsion of any landward wave
Before the wave folds and falls. No cormorant
On the prone yellow light, seaward under the sunset.
Only the usual swallows over wet sand and the unceasing foam
Fall in the air and recover.
The painful and anguished being lessens: the black sea and
unequal light
Are courage and peace for what desires them. The restless
weakness
Can fly like an idle swallow, now,
Over the pools and foam of the world.

Brewster Ghiselin

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FRAGMENTS OF TIME

DIEPPE: SUMMER OF 1932

And so you forget the quays of loneliness:
Dieppe beside the water,
And the peanut-vendor in a needle's crack.
The evening paid for sleep
In a broken bed, teakettle
Steaming the stove's socket:
Plumets of memory in harsh air.
And I am here in another lifetime
Forgetting my eyes in sleep.

WITH ALL DUE REVERENCE

With spatula flip the last ounce of regret
Into the frying pan of Arizona:
We sizzle with embezzled grief,
Lost to the countenance of rock.
Whatever dust contrives
To column an August sky,
The capitol without officiary
Shines bleakly in the sun.
No god could live in such
A kleiglight impaneling the brain.
What need there is for silence
Screams more madly
Than metropolis. The cottonwoods
Conspire with the setting sun.

Norman Macleod

AUTUMN

There is a touch of sadness in the air this tall,
Such as recurs to fellows of melancholy:
Memory of its passage out of time
Follows the year's progression,
Ash that settles a twister of flame
On mountaintops.
Autumn is quick to remember
And passes like a sunbeam in the wave.

DRUNKARD OUT OF THE COUNTRY

A gentle delapidation of soul
Props his weight on bars, foot astride rail:
The angle of utterance to stiffen his spine —
Through deep doorways of saloons
No brusque sunlight falls
Open upon clear air. The buzzards dine
Within refectories of memory.

Norman Macleod

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ZUNI RITUALS

THE EARTHQUAKE

From a Zuni Legend

There was an earthquake
At Where-The-Pine-Tree-Stands.

The rocks fell;
The people had fear.

The Priests assembled,
The Chiefs, the Head Ones;
They took council.

Call a fleet runner,
Let a messenger be sent forth
to Hopi;
Call Tecaminka, Echo,
The God who dwells South of Itiwana.

Where the earth is cracked
They have placed bundles of feathers,
They have made mats of reeds:
la'kine.

The daylight people
Do not know how to shut up the earth:

O Earth Mother,
Do not open up,
Nor let wild animals,

Katharine Kennedy

Nor floods
Destroy thy children:

Thy valuable children,
Thy valuable children.

THE DEAD WIFE

Hai'ya — she is dead,
The Warrior's wife.

Sit alone,
away from the fire,
eat no salt meat.

She is dead.

Pass the black meal
over the head,
Scatter the white meal.

Will she come back?
Will she return?

In a dream
She was laughing and calling
Ho'i.

Scatter the black prayer meal,
Ha'awo-tinan-e.

No ghost returns.

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THE SONGS

I heard the songs:
 The Thunder songs,
 The Dancing songs,
 The Fire-making songs,
 The Dawn-songs,
 The Flute-songs
 At the grinding of the corn...

I heard the songs
 Chanted under a turquoise sky
 In the Mountains North of Zuni:

I heard the cry of an ancient people:
 We who die
 Await the morning: Tekahanan'e
 Tekahanan'e.

In the Mountains North of Zuni
 I heard their cry....

THE TABOO WOMAN

She is teck'wi,
 Taboo.

Do not go near her,
 My Brother.
She is teck'wi.

Katharine Kennedy

She may not eat the purple-flowered herb.

The holy men of Zuni,
The Darkness Priests,
These guard her.

Kolowisi,
Guardian of the Sacred Springs,
Who punishes trespassers,
He will guard her.

Do not go near her,
My Brother,
She is teck'wi:
Taboo.

THE PRAYER

Our fathers,
A'lacina'we,
Who joy in our singing,
Who joy in our dancing,
From the Na'wekwa
Give us portions of magic,
That at the place of the Morningstar,
Moyatcunlana,
We shall find Life.
We shall find Life.

Translated by Katharine Kennedy

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ENDURING SOJOURN

THE EARTH IS BUILDED

Out of the sun,
Design of living flamed,
Slept, pushed, and cried
A path until the lush cool top
Submerged the ravaged rock,
And shy as the first ammonite,
The first bird flew;
Below dust turned to green,
Above it turned to blue.

Each moving thing, each law
By which it moved
Seemed shaped to fit the plan
By which the mind was grooved;
And these grooves were a part
Of the builded earth —
Steps for the climbing fist
Of birth.
Cells of a world, uncompassed
By the stars we know —
A domicile, too vast for death,
Where only life may go.

Marion Louise Bliss

DEEPER THAN DROUGHT

Now a long crowd of darknesses
And dreads are gone, and thriftily
A bar of gladness drifts into place
Below these stars.

Grief is an adverse wind
That drives with it the gloom
Of heavy thought. Let my heart
Be lightened now and my eyes rejoice.

As the first lantern lighted the prairie
Night, as the first lamp
Warmed the first prairie window,
Let me remember life.

My arms shall lift themselves above speaking,
Where there is no storm.
My eyes shall see only strength,
Born to endure, shaped to stand true.

Is it too much to ask for beauty
If it be the courage and breath of my heart?
Is it too much to ask an hour
To tell the way of an opening flower?

I cannot mourn again
The gold death of these pastures,
Nor the stout will of the zinnias to bloom,
Tortured to red and yellow, twisted to color in a windy oven.

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I am apart from this drouth —
It is a little thing that the corn thirst.
I am awakened by the moon rehearsing
Another part in another play — there is dew on the grass.

The moon has forgotten earth —
Cool as a silver fish and high and calm.
Even so, not high enough to measure this,
Which burns more fiery and more clear than dew.

This life — let the clouds go and the rain disappear.
It is here under these stars
Until the ultimate dawn crashes down.
There is beauty as the dry leaf crumples — there is the
sound of walking.

Marion Louise Bliss

ANNUNCIATION

A softer tongue than steeples have
Will be appropriate,
Annunciation quieter
To come when bells abate.

Joy is not that to clamor of
Nor love to be acclaimed —
But fainter far than elfin horns
And reticently named.

Edna Davis Romig

THE BRIDGE

The afternoon stands longer on a bridge
To look into the river with her one
Magnificence that is abstracted sun.
She stands and breathes enchantment all around.

You could almost lie down upon this air
So visible with motes and smoke and steam.
Fancy a hammock swinging from this beam
And you reclining with no need to dream.

The last postponement breaks against the night.
The afternoon gives up the ghost to sleep
Into the water, into the distant deep
Unfathomable abyss where all things sleep

That are begotten on the sun's body.
Now the spires, weary of being definite,
Now the church steeple solidly granite,
And the bridge girders: all bathe in it,

This ever-thickening vague-descending dark.
Yet see her standing as a phantom there
In the thick midst of night, remember her
Who made the bridge a permanence of air.

Dorothy Cooper

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IN AUGUST

A hot wind sighs through the tree-tops, crying,
"Curl — curl your leaves!
Today I have been flying
Where the Mohave weaves
Mirages, treacherous, lying.
Drop your leaves down
Now, in your prime,
Withered and brown
Before their time!"

A red sun shouts, on the garden blazing,
"Falter and fail!
Today I have been gazing
Where vultures sail
Above lean cattle, grazing
On barren slopes;
By the dry river-bed
I have seen antelopes
Dying, or dead!"

A white moon glides through the night sky, saying,
"Take heart, and live!
Tonight I have been straying
Where glaciers give
New life to rivers; playing
On silver gleams

Winona Montgomery Gilliland

Of waterfalls,
While through your dreams
The rain-dove calls!"

Winona Montgomery Gilliland

SUMMER ACCIDENT

Frightened in the blue dark salt sea
his heart fails and the boy dies
face downward.

In the distance of shambling breakers
a fisherman's shipwreck from another horrendous day
lies on its stubborn side
hardly swayed by the voluminous wave.

Seagulls make rhymes of themselves in the air.

Shall I ask what am I?
Shall I estimate myself by this fact?
Or shall I forget myself before I am forgotten?

David Greenhood

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FIVE POEMS

TO THE GREAT WIND

Madden the dust
Of the dry plain dead,
Turn up the stones
And loosen the earth.
Wind mazurkas
Tear ribbons from the trees!
Surround with cyclones
The desert cities.
Move the mad forest
To the mountain lakes
And drag down the fire
From the wasted sky.

Unbind the giants
And let Prometheus
Crush with his chains
The great Sea Serpent
And the monster Elk.

Strangle the cities
That resist with stone
The anger of the Lizard King
Whose eye fixed like a planet
Burns in the heart of the catacombs
And at whose command

Harold Meredith Chown

The bees, the locusts and the worms
Will consume the land
And drive to plunder
From their haunts
The jungle lions and the boas.

The weapon of death
Shall be that day.
The frenzied roar of all the beasts,
And the fangs of the snake
Shall close on the limbs of a hunted man.

WINTER

The delay is great in the land of Moon.
The horsemen wait
Mirrored in the ice,
Wait again for the waters to run.

Craters are full of snow.
The valleys of crystal rock,
And purple jasper trees
Sway and bend
Before the flight of winds.

Black winds pass
Without a storm
And the horsemen stand
Waiting for the wind that brings water —
Water to the land of Moon.

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THE EYOT

Murmur by the reeds
Murmur by the weeds
Of the poplar and the silent ash.

Still the white bull stands
In the stream
With ripples around his hooves.

Herons and herrings,
Sea-gulls and eagles
Play in the clouds
In the mountain smoke

Thunders scrape the sky
And when the rock is struck,
A fountain springs
To quench the thirsting beak.

INDIAN SUMMER

The violin colours remain
After the harvest wind
Has swept away
The pamphlets of exuberant summer.

The proclamations of youth
Are faded
And the corners curled.

Harold Meredith Chown

How fertile was the time of year,
How rich in expectations.

Green life cannot be always
So full of hope
And so unthinking.

The one-day flower
Blossomed and died
While the caterpillar
Was preparing to fly
From under its leaves.

WAR

Cancer crawls on the mountain,
Gnaws out the heart of the forest.
The two brothers
Linked since Babylon
Draw their knives to sever the bonds.
The shepherd and his flock
Flee before the wolves
Down the white paths
Of heaven's Cow,
The Cow with the great udder
Flowing on the night
To join the Euphrates
In the plains of Persia.

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Great king,
Pause in thy wrath
To consider the creatures
Who now without shelter
Throw up their arms
And watch the flood rising in the valley.

The desert is near.
The sea is full.
The pomegranate and the apricot
Burden the branches
Of the pleasure orchards.

The maiden's cloak
Is cast aside
And the women run naked
Through the streets
Of the city of War.

Children are flung into the swollen river
And the horsemen
Wear on their lances
Entrails, skulls and thumbs
Taken from the slain.

In the roar of the waters and the stamping of hooves
The shrill trumpets
Warn the land
Of the coming of a great flock of birds:

Harold Meredith Chou

The vulture, the falcon
And the clumsy albatross,
The ibis and the crow,
The heronshaw
And the furry owl.

The sun cannot shine
Through the beating of so many feathers,
And the noise of the hawk is loudest of all.

The city is covered with birds.
The corpses stare.
The feast begins
And the sun goes down
In smoke.

Harold Meredith Chou

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

THE CENTURY OF LEOPARDI

LEOPARDI is a poet whose personal legend and tragic cast of mind have seriously impaired our sense of his lyric greatness. To readers of English he has come down as a somber pessimist who wrote an everlasting Nay against the hope and confidence of his romantic contemporaries, prophet of the despair and nihilism that afflicted the ambitious dreams of his generation when frustration began to darken "the world's great age" of the Nineteenth Century. He has never, moreover, found a distinguished English translator. Except for the author of *The City of Dread Night*, his work has left little impression on the familiar poetry of the past hundred years. The anniversary of his death arrived on June 14th — that pathetic death in Naples that brought an end to his tortured existence among strange scenes and unfriendly faces, far removed from his childhood home at Recanati or the cities of his greatest ambition, Rome and Florence. But like Pushkin, another great romantic whose centenary fell this year, he now reappears as one of the salient figures of his age, a reminder of those deep human and intellectual struggles that gave a new direction to European poetry and left their stamp on its imagination.

Leopardi was unlike Pushkin in almost every respect of experience and temperament. He had neither a taste for fashionable society nor the robust physical energy of the Russian; his career is the antithesis of action; he stood in little danger of political interdict as of dying in a duel. I

The Century of Leopardi

was solitary and self-consumed, incapable of drama or insurrectionary violence, natively short of humor, and in spite of several efforts in that direction, unconvinced of the need or the success of inflaming the world around him with revolutionary hope in the spirit of Shelley, Chénier, and the author of *Boris Godunov*. His genius was not rooted in the sense of physical and emotional realism that nourished Pushkin's inspiration. But there are several points of contact. Like Pushkin he saw the literature and art of his country in need of a national awakening; he tried to spur it by satire; he repudiated the false hand of rhetoric and courtly influence; he combined classical feeling with a vigorous and humble instinct for fact; and above all, he sensed the dangers of the romantic inspiration as lying in the unbridled and uncritical codes of liberalism to which Pushkin applied the corrective of wit and social veracity but which Leopardi could only reject as another form of "l'infinita vanità del tutto." His vision of that vanity was soon to haunt the poets of many countries; in England and France it closed on the minds of poets who have become the special lights of the poetry of our time — Arnold, Thomson, Hardy, Housman, Nerval, Villiers, and Laforgue, who pointed their disciples toward the shadow and showed them fear in a handful of dust.

Upon this line of minds a reaction of contempt has now turned; their versions of negation belong to the age when moral and humanitarian presumption invited its own defeat; their drift toward decadence in thought and art has been forcibly repudiated, and along with the feeble despair of

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his successors, Leopardi's tragic utterance has met a similar scorn. The result is that his achievement has been unjustly reduced to the common level of easy pessimism that claims too many of his followers. The variety and maturing splendor of his work is lost to sight, and outside Italy few readers know him as one of the greatly inspired linguists of modern times, a Hellene of pure cast, an experimenter with scientific symbolism, a master of philosophic dialogue, one of the first modern interpreters of Dante, a satirist in the tradition of Lucian, the author of the *Appressamento alla Morte* with its somber anti-Shelleyan conviction, of *Il Risorgimento* with its rebuke to the decadence of Italian culture, and of the final tragic sublimity of *Il Ginestra*. Obstructing these achievements are biographical details of unrelieved pathos which at times make Leopardi appear like a blighted version of Byron and at others like a living counterpart of Nerval's *Desdichado*. We see him in youth, sickly, deformed, and nervous, driving himself to illness over his books in the spectral mansion at Recanati over which his imperious mother presided in her efforts to recoup the family fortunes, while a bigoted and neurotic father secluded himself in the library. We follow him through years of passionate study, enfeebled health, disappointment, and roving labors. We hear of the hopeless passions for Gertrude Cassi and Fanny Targioni, of his fruitless journeys to Rome and Florence, and the final days in the hostile atmosphere of Naples, where his last hours were haunted by memories of the "natio borgo selvaggio" of his mirthless childhood.

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The legacy of romanticism has weighed heavily on its inheritors; one of the major critical problems of the past fifty years has been the scrutiny of its assumptions and the revision of its ideals. It has become particularly acute since the War, when the inversion of romantic values already long in process took on the form of a new kind of nihilism, a willing instead of a protesting submission to defeat and moral oblivion, a facile acceptance of tragedy that has made our recent revivalisms and restored faiths almost too easy to come by, and often as uncritical as the despairs they came to reprove. The defects of the romantic mind are easier to decide than its virtues, but now, when our sense of these virtues has become dulled by too much talk about Shelley, Blake, Coleridge, and Hugo, the stimulation of neglected aspects of the romantic genius is indispensable — the imaginative and psychological realism of Pushkin, or the intellectual severity of Leopardi that transcends and magnifies, as Santayana has said, the allegory of defeat in his verse.

The student, the writer, the sufferer, the wanderer, was only Conte Giacomo Leopardi, but the poet was Orpheus himself. . . . Leopardi lived in a romantic tower, a dismal, desolate ruin; but through the bars of his prison he beheld the same classic earth and Olympian sky that had been visible to Homer, Pindar, and Sophocles. The world is always classical, the truth of human destiny is always clear, if only immersion in our animal cares does not prevent us from seeing it. Lifting the eyes would be so easy, yet it is seldom done; and when a rapt poet compels us to do so, we are arrested, we are rebuked, we are delivered.

M. D. Z.

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THE ESTHETICS OF GERARD HOPKINS

AND there they lie, my old notebooks and beginnings of things, ever so many, which it seems to me might well have been done, ruins and wrecks. . . ." So Gerard Hopkins wrote in 1885, four years before his death, to his friend Baillie, referring to the private records of his mind which are disclosed now in the volume of his papers which Humphry House has prepared for publication.¹ The material possibly does not include much that he would himself have chosen to publish, and may not be, as a total, more profitable in revelation than the two volumes of his correspondence with Robert Bridges and Richard Watson Dixon. Nevertheless, if minds are to be seen in the records of their activities, here are clues of no slight significance to the modes and methods of a decisive poetic originality.

A reader of these pages will, for example, become easily acquainted with the depth of background there was for such epistolary dicta of Hopkins as that on the English Lake Poets: "They were faithful but not rich observers of nature"; or that on Byron and his school: they had for nature a deep feeling, but "the most barbarous and untrustworthy eye." That his own scrutiny of the sensuous forms of this world was boundlessly and minutely attentive, readers of the journal (1868-1875) included here can hardly fail to

¹*The Note-books and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins*. Edited with Notes and a Preface by Humphry House. Oxford University Press.

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feel. "I noticed the snow before me," he writes (for himself), "*squalentum*, coat below coat, sketched in intersecting ridges, bearing 'idiom'— I have no other word yet for that which takes the eye or mind in a bold hand or effective sketching. . . ." "Hailstones are shaped like the cut of diamonds called brilliants. . . ." "They (young lambs) toss and toss: it is as if it were the earth that flung them. . . . Sometimes they rest a little space on the hind legs and the fore feet drop curling in on the breast. . . ." "Clouds, however solid they may look far off, are I think wholly made of film in the sheet or in the tuft. The bright wool packs that pelt before the gale in a clear sky are in the tuft and you can see the wind unraveling and rending them finer than any sponge till with one easy reach overhead they are morsaled to nothing and consumed. . . ." These are the packed pages of an esthetic Darwin. From such bursting intellectual treasures more than one substantial poetic fortune might have issued.

If he was a naturalist, however, he was a naturalist of beauty. These pronouncements were not random exuberances. They were the products of definite esthetic views which, it seems evident from the facts submitted in this volume, were matured by Hopkins quite early in his life. The long Platonic dialogue entitled *The Origin of Beauty*, dated May 12, 1865, and supposed to have been written for Walter Pater, then a Fellow of Brasenose College, Oxford; the undated brief essay, *Poetic Diction*, which probably belongs to 1865 or at all events is an early production; the

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fragment dated February 9, 1868, beginning, "All words mean either things or the relations of things"; and the notes on the metaphysics of Parmenides where first occurs the word "inscape," so significant in Hopkins' thought: this seeming miscellany of fragments is really a cohering body of ideas which deal with the question of beauty in the arts, particularly in poetry. Such a body of ideas in so young a man—he was twenty-one at the beginning of this period and twenty-four at its close—might possibly prove an instance in point of Santayana's contention that "a free spirit at the age of twenty can perfectly well speak with authority, not indeed about what has happened, or what is going to happen, but about what ought to be."

It is doubtful whether within the present limits of space one can give any convincing impression of Hopkins' esthetic ideas. This must be had by perusal, in fact by study at length, of the matter this volume supplies. That such a study will be rewarding, however, that it will be its own reward, the reader may be assured, for it is seldom that one finds a body of ideas that is, on the one hand, so sharply conscious, so organic with the art that developed from it, and on the other, so fundamentally original, so immediate a rationale of the abundant instinctive responses of the man to his world.

An adequate account of Hopkins' esthetic ideas is not possible here, but some hint may be indicated, speaking briefly and approximately. Beauty when it arises, Hopkins considered, is the collective effect of a work of art, whether that art be created by man or by nature. (His journal, of course, as

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has already been suggested, is crowded with minutely considered studies of nature's art.) The perception of this collective effect by the individual contemplating the work of art arises through acts of comparison whereby he describes likenesses and differences between one part and another, and between the parts and the whole. He sees each part in the light of the others and of the whole, and the whole in the light of each and all of the parts. His experience of beauty, however, does not arise from the perception of the parts or of the whole, but from the perception of certain relations obtaining between them; or, put in another way, from his discernment in the object of design, pattern, structure (which is multi-dimensional pattern), or "inscape." These views might be summarized in Hopkins' own epigram: "Beauty is a virtue of inscape." Implied, of course, is the qualification that not all kinds of inscapes have such virtue, but just which kinds do possess it, Hopkins (lacking perhaps the temerity of Burke) does not indicate, although the extent of his researches into nature's inscapes suggests that he may have been essaying a classification. That he conned and dwelt upon his amassments might be supposed from the editor's description of the journal manuscript — pages worn and illegible at their lower corners "from repeated thumbing."

Such ideas as these are applicable, and were applied by him, not merely to the inscapes of the eye but to those of the ear as well, to poetry and to music. Poetry, by such views, is speech framed in likeness-difference patterns of sound, for contemplation by the ear. These patterns are to

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be heard for their own sake as sound patterns, "even over and above their interest as meaning," though not presumably apart from it, or without it, since such a view would ultimately produce the doctrine that a pattern of non-sense syllables could constitute poetry.

As much as would be the case with visual patterns, these likeness-difference patterns of speech may be complex, may be patterns of patterns. And the more complex the design, and the more it penetrates and organizes the verbal substance, the more "close and elaborate become the comparisons the mind must keep making," the more intellectual becomes "the spell of contemplation." Thus the poet is not merely a dealer in conventional verbal responses organized in conventional verbal and verse patterns. He is a writer in "sound-words," "sound-clauses," "sound-sentences"; the sound-words being often single syllables, very important in themselves as components of likeness-difference patterns; and the sound-clauses and sound-sentences running (not always respectfully) through, between, beyond, the accustomed patterns of verse and stanza, specifically and most elaborately scoring sense with sound.

If for no other reason, these ideas are valuable as a gloss upon the poetic methods of one who, as I. A. Richards has said, "may be described, without opposition, as the most obscure of English verse writers." They suggest strongly, to any one who will put himself to the pains of considering the matter, that the supposed obscurity of Hopkins' poetry is chargeable, perhaps in major share, not to the

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poetry but to a generation of readers to whom the reading of poetry is very nearly a lost art. Those who attempt to read Hopkins merely with the eye, as we do, deserve the chagrin they will undoubtedly experience. Hardly since Milton has there been a body of verse which more demands to be uttered, to be variously tried in the organs and imagery of breathing and speech, to be listened to and heard, until its intricate spreading patterns of response develop themselves and possess the reader. "Oddnesses" and "blemishes" there may well be. Oddness is the vice of originality, as Hopkins noted. But in alleging blemishes against this poetry, we will be well-counselled if we first devote some consideration to the question of whether the blemish is in the poetry or in ourselves.

One may well thank the present editor. There are, of course, aspects of Hopkins' personality not apparent here. There is little indication of the inner discordance between the poet and priest in him which was possibly his chief disaster. There is only one reference to the well-known Dr. Pusey who at one time played a not enviable part in Hopkins' spiritual difficulties: "I confessed to Dr. Pusey, Dec. 16, 1865." But the matter gathered here is certainly and significantly additional to the published volumes of Hopkins' correspondence. Each reader must put together for himself the items of an impression, but here, surely, are to be found, in some of the intimacies of their personal background, the intense consciousness, the humility, the stature of intellectual attainment, the poetic zest and pertinacity, the instinctive

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laboring fire in the cause of beauty, which combined to engender a body of poetry in which no word or syllable is wasted, no word make-believe, a body of verses the importance of which in restoring to verse something of its proper heritage as "simple, sensuous, and passionate" *speech*, is possibly not yet adequately appreciated.

Charles K. Trueblood

POETRY AND POLITICAL FAITH

Stephen Spender's *The Destructive Element* is an ambitious book, attempting as it does to place the more significant writers of our time in a meaningful pattern.¹ But its most important aspect is not what it tells us about such writers as James, Eliot, Joyce, and Yeats, but what it tells us about Spender himself. As a book of literary estimates, it makes many acute and stimulating judgments and a number which are plainly stupid. The chapters on the poetry of Yeats and the criticism of Eliot are least satisfactory. At the risk of oversimplifying Spender's interpretation, one may summarize by saying Spender holds that the writers of the recent past have been faced with a world which does not share the writers' own beliefs. Spender feels that perhaps "this despairing stage is now over.... It is now possible for the artist to discover a system of values that are not purely subjective and individualistic, but objective and social; real in the

¹*The Destructive Element*, by Stephen Spender. Houghton, Mifflin.
Forward from Liberalism, by Stephen Spender. Random House.

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world of a society *outside* the artist in the same way as Nature is real."

The system of values that are objective and social is for Spender, of course, that of Communism; and the book is obviously an *apologia pro sua fide*. Spender, Auden, and Lewis are presumably, in Spender's opinion, on firmer ground than Yeats with his magic and Eliot with his Anglo-Catholicism. *The Destructive Element* affords an opportunity to see just how much stronger this ground really is.

Obviously two questions are involved: one, the relation of belief to poetry, and the other the credibility of the particular belief of Communism. Spender is careful to avoid falling into the propaganda-art imbroglio, and his solution of the problem, whereas it will hardly prove acceptable to dyed-in-the-wool Marxists (Spender has already been attacked as a counter-revolutionary), will be gratifying to those who are interested in his poetry. But, though harmony in belief between the poet and his audience is admittedly of value to the artist, Spender is not very illuminating in his description of what those advantages are. Indeed, the reader will find it difficult not to believe that Spender's interest in Communism is essentially a sentimental one. The suspicion that it is sentimental is not relieved by an examination of Spender's most recent book, *Forward from Liberalism*, in which he attempts to explain why he is a Communist.

The most attractive qualities of both *Forward from Liberalism* and *The Destructive Element* are the liberal

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virtues of tolerance and fair-mindedness. The strongest element in the first of the two books is the attack which is made on present-day stupidities; the weakest element is the positive recommendation. There emerges from the book only the sense of a very real passion for social justice, dressed up in the newest liberal garb, and finding no place to go except toward Communism.

Logically Spender's muddlement really begins with his definition of the relation between science and religion and science and poetry. Spender refuses to apply the term "religion" to any belief which does not involve the supernatural, and consequently fails to see that Communism is a religion, and that his relation to it is that of a convert to a faith rather than that of a person convinced of a scientific theory from a laboratory demonstration. By the same token, he fails to see that he is—so far as his poetry is concerned—in precisely the same boat with Eliot and Yeats: that is, he holds a system of beliefs which the majority of Englishmen do not hold, and which he is attempting to employ in his poetry with emotional integrity.

The point is worth making, for what lends color to his attack on Yeats and Eliot, and what makes credible the view that his own position is somehow objective and real, is the implication that his own position is one which a reasonable, scientific person might believe in, whereas such a person could not hold either Mr. Yeats' or Mr. Eliot's "beliefs." Spender admits that the Communist values afford sanctions for morals and that he welcomes such sanctions. Suppose

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that we define religion as that system of beliefs (unsusceptible of scientific proof) which affords sanctions for morals. Then Spender is in the position of the myth-maker no less than are Eliot and Yeats. One does not deny that Spender might make out a fine case for Communism as a religion in opposition to Christianity. But this is not the case which he makes in these books. The moment that he realizes that Communism stands ultimately on the same basis for belief as Christianity, he will be able to define the relation of his rôle as poet to the belief or lack of belief in his audience; and perhaps then also the relation of belief to the goodness of poetry.

There is a very real connection between this defect in Spender's thinking and a softness in his own poetry. In his treatment of Eliot's criticism he writes, "Blake, Shelley, Goethe, D. H. Lawrence, all of them lack that little something which Eliot expresses in different ways, but which in the servants' hall would be described as 'knowing one's place'." Such a statement not only constitutes an almost perverse misinterpretation of Eliot; it indicates a blindness in regard to certain defects in his own work. To take only one name from the list (and not to subscribe to his apparent equation of Eliot's criticism of all four): what Shelley lacked was a sense of proportion — a lack which allowed him to become one-sided, shrill, and sentimental. I take it that this is primarily what Eliot finds fault with in Shelley. It is a fault which Spender's own poetry does not wholly escape.

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Indeed, the revolutionary poet who "foretells a future belief" is in no better position than the nostalgic poet who expresses the belief of the past. Both poets find their problem in relating the belief to the unbelieving present, and either poet may falsify that position into sentimentality. Spender states that "the writer who grasps anything of Marxist theory, feels that he is moving in a world of reality and in a purposive world, not merely a world of obstructive and oppressive *things*." Just so. And here we obviously have the function which Spender's belief in Marxism performs for him. But the implication that *any* writer who will take the trouble to understand Marxism will feel that he is moving in a world of reality is a matter which Spender assumes and does not prove. It is something, of course, which he could not prove. Marxist theory cannot make everyone feel in contact with reality for the obvious reason that Marxist theory is not reality but an interpretation of reality, and, like other interpretations, it can be questioned. The virtues of *The Destructive Element* and *Forward from Liberalism* are virtues of the heart rather than of the head. This is not to sneer at them. They are virtues which we can hardly dispense with; but we cannot dispense with the others either. And one can hope that the new poetry in England will not sacrifice the gains which have been won in the last generation with so much difficulty.

Cleanth Brooks

The Hero of Arabia

REVIEWS

THE HERO OF ARABIA

Lawrence, the Last Crusade, by Selden Rodman. Viking Press.

Ornament of Honor, by E. H. R. Altounyan. Macmillan Co.

T. E. Lawrence began his career in the East as an archaeologist and student of Crusade architecture. The outbreak of the World War soon demonstrated that peaceful archaeological expeditions bring forth, as a predictable by-product, a fruit of knowledge that comes in very handy at the War office. Lawrence, with his familiarity with colloquial Arabic and the topography of Syria, became a major factor in organizing an Arab revolt against the Turks. Having gained the personal confidence of Arab leaders who were willing to fight for national freedom, Lawrence prompted a series of guerrilla raids and battles which culminated finally in the breaking of Turkish power and its withdrawal from the war.

With the war ended, however, the national aspirations of the Arabs, which had proved so helpful in times of stress, came into conflict with certain other plans of the victorious allied nations. In fact, a secret treaty had long ago assigned northern Syria to France and divided Arabia into British and French "spheres of influence." At Versailles the sell-out of Lawrence and his fighting chieftains was completed.

Disillusioned and haunted with a sense of his own guilt, the duped hero withdrew to write a history of the revolt in the desert and its betrayal. The record completed (of which

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only a carefully expurgated edition was made available to the public), he joined at length the British Royal Air Force as a mechanic with a private's rating. Under the pseudonym of Shaw, he hoped to escape the fame which had grown so distasteful to him, and though publicity still pursued him, he managed to remain in the service until 1935 when he was obliged to retire. Shortly afterwards, he was killed in a motor-cycle accident.

Selden Rodman has attempted to render the meaning of this man's life in a verse-narrative bird's-eye view composed of factual and imagined episodes. His poem divides Lawrence's career into three phases: The Lamp, the Sword, the Wheel — the scholar, the soldier-scout, and the airplane mechanic with many memories.

Lawrence did not succeed in generalizing the significance of his betrayal. He conceived it as a problem of individual honor, not of historic or economic necessity. His poet-biographer envisions his pathos as a tragedy of frustrated self-expression:

This pain: I yearned for active self-expression
Before the War broke, and I thought to find
My truths in this crusade. Instead I wondered
Whether all reputations, like my own,
Were built on like deceptions.

This approach does little to clarify the meaning of Lawrence's life. According to Rodman, Lawrence turned his back on mankind and sought solace in the "chastity" of machines. The idealist gave place to the cynic, with a touch of the estheticism of pure action to make life bearable. The

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seductiveness of fascism to a mind with such a cast is touched upon, but in an extremely inconclusive manner.

But whatever Lawrence's own conception of himself might have been, the ironic significance of his rôle lay in the inevitability with which his work was turned against his original ideals, and in the historic efficiency with which he was converted into an agent of British imperialism and made subservient, against his will, to its needs and its needs alone — in brief, in the essential *irrelevancy* of his ideals. Unfortunately, there is acceptance but not irony in Rodman's presentation. He finds in Lawrence that combination of scholar and man-of-action, practical leader and philosopher of individual integrity, impressive personality and selfless enthusiast, who has become a literary Ideal-Man in recent years. Like the hero of Auden's *The Ascent of the F6*, Lawrence

... fears that he might leave his own eyes blind:
Acting some wish for other wills, some lie
For easier masters. So he quit this life
With Uxbridge Airdrome for his monastery.

Apparently the machine-age Zarathustra must either serve some master after all or find the mechanical equivalent of a solitary mountain-peak as his élite habitation.

Rodman's verse is unpretentious and almost candidly flat. His attempt to draw prose records into his poem, justified by the tremendous significance which history has acquired for the modern mind, suffers poetically from his lack of an adequate sense of phrasing, of that music of verbal quantity which gives a structural character to statement in the prosody of Pound and Williams. Seen exclusively from the

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point of view of language, Rodman's poem is thoroughly mediocre. Yet it is a noticeable contribution to an essential undertaking of modern poetry: the effort to lay hold of the character and meanings of historical events.

Rodman's lack of verbal and dramatic tension, his willingness to reflect passively certain salient moments of Lawrence's career, is attributable to his inadequate understanding of his hero's fate. The facts remain superior to the dynamic they generate in the poet. Precisely the opposite (if one may speak of opposites in connection with poetry) is the case with Dr. Altounyan's *Ornament of Honor*. Here history disappears completely, as the poet's internal energy, unchecked by any obligation to actuality, lofts him into the empty strata of ethical essences. "The poem," writes Altounyan, "was designed as a memorial embodying what I believe to be our [his and Lawrence's] common philosophy of life." And its jacket boasts that "it is as unrelated to time as any poem can be." Dr. Altounyan — whose first published poem, written in his middle forties, this is — seems to be so deeply immersed in the subjective activity of reflecting on absolute meanings that his "ornament" detaches itself from everything in Lawrence that gave him importance or "honor." The main section of his poem consists of a *Fugue* of 119 love-sonnets addressed to his hero, and these are imitation-Shakespeare to the extent that one hails itself as "inscribed"

In golden letters that shall outlive both
Thy fame and myself living . . .

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Should any reader still question the superiority of the prosy modernism of which Rodman has availed himself over the "true poetry" of immortal meditations *in vacuo*, he has but to compare these two specimens of poetic hero-worship. The question of genius not being involved, the facts win in a walk!

Harold Rosenberg

THIN SMILE OF THE MIND

Poems, by C. F. MacIntyre. The Macmillan Company.

Whether C. F. MacIntyre is (as I suppose him to be) the most interesting poet the late year introduced, his work at least has richly those qualities which distinguish a new poet's verse as really new. His *Poems* can scarcely be discussed without reference to their author for, knowing nothing at all about him beyond these pages, one feels them as the emergence of a distinct personality — as a Frost, or Eliot, for example, whatever their ultimate positions in fame, are remarkable in their appearances if for no other reason than that they are not quite like anyone else. Mere eccentricity can achieve this, and it would not be enough that Mr. MacIntyre at his most characteristic impresses one as a fresh compound of wit and unsociability and as a more sophisticated but not less wry Henry Thoreau. There remains the all important consideration of MacIntyre as artist, and this his first book answers with a varying but at times brilliant conclusiveness.

Perhaps the one mark upon these lyrics and commentaries which reveals their author to be not always a mature poet is

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the occasional indecision of his poetic purpose. Any poet with MacIntyre's curiously combined gifts of the ironic and the sensuous is bound to snag upon cross currents. Given to rich imagery and also given to plain speaking, MacIntyre is sure when he works in either mood, but he is now and then confounded when (if I may be permitted one more metaphor) he would play the red and black at once. His approach at times divides; yet if this makes for uncertainty and failure here and there, it is nevertheless a product of that same lively diversity and keen sincerity which stamp as really and continually interesting the majority of these poems of people and seasons and the changes in both.

I shall never look at the moon without
the thin smile of the mind,

he remarks; and it is that thin smile of the mind which so delightfully sharpens his work. To Robinson Jeffers' ideas add a sense of humor and you would have someone very much like MacIntyre. He enjoys the flesh and the world in which he dwells — that is what these poems "are about"; and he also enjoys, in a detached intellectual humor which is sometimes angry, the inevitabilities which face the passions and vanities of both — and that is what these poems *are*. The difference between MacIntyre's intellectualism and the religion of the past fifteen years is that he looks at the moon, and this seems to me very important. In his conception, the worlds of the flesh and the spirit make war, but neither becomes exclusive and (therefore) dry.

The poet is at his best in the portraits of *Trivial Lives* in

Thin Smile of the Mind

which, principally, he employs legendary figures with an acute freshness: Atalanta, the fleet-footed — “but not too fast”; Alcestis — “Lady, . . . who twice goes to Death’s bedroom has condoned the vice”; or that excellent commentary, at once so flattering and so factual, on women:

Centripetally they are poised in the wheel
of their world, smooth axles, jewel-set;
and though the man — like a rim — goes far, they feel
they will somehow come as far as the wheel can get.

There are lines such as those beginning

Perhaps the rose is overpraised. The sun
allows a chaster flower his shield’s design . . .

which wholly testify to a beautiful ear; and there are phrases such as “motherly yucca” which are genuine poetic images; and there are entire poems, such as *Iron*, in which the play of wit and image combine to that rare ripe thing, imagination. Whoever he is, Mr. MacIntyre is a poet and a very good poet.

Winfield Townley Scott

WORKS IN PROGRESS

More Than Bread, by Joseph Auslander. Macmillan Co.
Spell Against Time, by David Morton. G. P. Putnam’s.

There are too many books, especially books of bad poetry. While first-rate writers continue to go uncollected, Mr. Auslander and Mr. Morton manage to get more and more books published. It is true, of course, that fifteen years ago Mr. Auslander was considered one of the most promising young American poets; how Mr. Morton got his reputation I do not know. At their present rate, they will be leaders in

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the race which is being run to find out how many verses can be written in a lifetime. The worst part of it is that both these men stopped writing anything like real poetry long ago; they have played out and repeated what talent they had until it has become unbearable to see on the jackets of their books that they are "leading contemporary poets."

Mr. Auslander is the more galling because he is pretentious. He pedestals the poet in a little world of his own; he philosophizes in the most pendentive fashion; he apologizes for himself. When he gets a good idea, he wraps it in mummy-clothes. He occasionally writes an almost-not-bad poem, like *Adolescence*, which he mars beyond repair with figures like "Her breast is a little pointed pear" and "the vivid throng." When he approaches his own world it is with distaste. He finds Keats and Catullus being shouted off the stage, which is untrue and therefore, among other reasons, bad poetry. And so Mr. Auslander goes back to the "golden carp" and the "Garden of the Word." It would be all right if he knew what words ought to do, but since he doesn't it is too bad.

Mr. Morton offers his book in two sections: a cycle of seasonal poems and *Other Poems*. His *Cycle* is very muddled, and his *Other Poems* might well have been the *Cycle*. It might have been a much smaller book. The same things are hammered at over and over, in the same way, without variation in theme or in language. The first poem of the book is the best; this is clever placing. But for the rest, it is mere possibility, an occasional happy phrasing, but

Works in Progress

mainly the old stuff turned out in expected rhymes and soporific rhythms. Winter is always "the dark season," and after the "first bird" comes a later "bird." There is not even a finch.

These two books bring out again, more strongly than ever, some much neglected principles of good writing, all of them old, but unheeded by too many writers. They have been pointed out most recently by John Crowe Ransom in *The Southern Review* in an article on the poetry of George Marion O'Donnell: the need for living language in the work of any poet if he is to have any of the qualities of endurance. Mr. Auslander can't get by with "I am poetry," and neither can Mr. Morton, with his nameless "buds along the bough." The age of poetic inversions is past, and words like "shapen" and "a-borning" are no good. The gnomic titles which these two writers use are only one more indication of their lack of imagination: there are too many like *February Bird* and *The City*. There is no definition, no assertion in this work, and no judgment. It all sounds too much the same, like the ticking of a clock which one does not notice in a room after he has been there for a little while. The reader cannot be shocked in any way by this poetry — he knows what he is getting: the occasional nice vaguely classical references, the "love of nature and life," etc., etc.

And there is nothing to be done. Both Mr. Auslander and Mr. Morton have tried a little to help themselves, but it is certainly unpleasant work for them. Their rhythms

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are so established that when they do break away from them, they only do more damage. (One of the poems in the Auslander book is called *Person from Porlock*.) These poets are their own evil geniuses; they have not known when to stop. There are many reasons for their failure, but what is the worst is their lack of vitality. *Samuel French Morse*

TRANSLATING PUSHKIN

Eugene Onegin. Translated from the Russian of Alexander Pushkin by Dorothea Prall Radin and George Z. Patrick. University of California Press.

I can think of no rasher adventure than translating Pushkin. It may furnish lots of fun to the translator. That is his or her business. But when he or she or they come to report to others the results of their indiscretion, it is not always quite what it should be. And it is simply their bad luck if the listener happens to be one like myself who never a-Pushkining went, but was brought up on the poet from the cradle. In this latest version Prof. Patrick apparently supplied a complete prose version, and, with his constant coöperation, Miss Radin has devised the verses. This, surely, is not the formula for the translation of great poetry. One must possess the dual gift of being able to experience the mood of one language and of being able to communicate the mood to a language whose mood is quite different. Therefore, only one great poet can translate another great poet. This is axiomatic. Consider these famous lines which begin Tatyana's letter to Onegin, as rendered in this version:

Translating Pushkin

I write you. If I took an hour
I could not make myself more plain
And now you have it in your power
To punish me with your disdain.
But if you find you have for me
The smallest drop of sympathy
You will not leave me in such pain.

Then consider the same lines in Prof. Oliver Elton's incomplete version, not mentioned in Miss Radin's *Introduction*, which mentions Spalding's now inaccessible version and Babette Deutsch's more recent rendering.

That I am writing you this letter
Will tell you all; and you are free
Now to despise me; and how better,
I wonder, could you punish me?
But you, if you are sparing ever
One drop of pity for my fate,
Will not have left me desolate.

There can be no doubt at all as to which is the superior version as poetry. But Elton's (and for that matter, Miss Deutsch's) happens to be also the more accurate rendering. Miss Radin's last three lame and halting lines are bad enough. Will she excuse them on the ground that "Pushkin wrote his poem in the early nineteenth century, when for a heroine to declare her love unasked to a hero was an act calling for great honesty and courage, so that in some passages I have thought slightly stilted phrases best suited to stilted conventions"? I am afraid Miss Radin knows too much about early Victorian heroines and too little of Russian heroines of any time. Again, there is nothing in the original to suggest the words, "If I took an hour I could not make myself more plain." Why drag in "an hour," and what

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has making oneself "more plain" to do with the case? These are the translator's words, not Pushkin's, and there is nothing in Pushkin even to approximate them. And why "sympathy" when the word "pity" is so much better and is the word used by the poet himself?

Why has the dedication been omitted? And *why* was the translation attempted at all?

John Cournos

COMMENT

The centenary of Leopardi, the great Italian lyric poet of the Nineteenth Century, has been observed in England by the publication of *The Poems of Leopardi*, a complete text in Italian, with translation into the metres of the original by Geoffrey L. Bickersteth. This has been published by the Cambridge University Press, and is circulated in America by the Macmillan Co. Two years ago the Oxford Press published the Marchesa Iris Origo's excellent biographical study, *Leopardi*, for which George Santayana wrote a prefatory essay. In Italy the fame of Leopardi has recently been observed by a complete edition of his works edited for the Officina Tipographica Gregoriana by Scarpa and Bacchelli, and by numerous essays, of which Zottoli's *Leopardi, Storia di un'anima*, is a masterly study of the poet and his art.

Another book of interest to our readers, published here by Macmillan, is *The Works of Morris and of Yeats in Relation to Early Saga Literature*, by D. M. Hoare. This sets the verse of these two writers against its origins in Icelandic and Irish saga, and examines it afresh to estimate the propriety of their interpretations.

The Macmillan Co. has also announced for early appearance in America the translation recently made of *The Ten Principal Upanishads* by W. B. Yeats and Shri Purohit Swami. Likewise in the autumn this company will issue a newly enlarged edition of Yeats' *Autobiographies*, to include not only the *Reveries over Childhood and Youth* and *The Trembling of a Veil*, but also the four parts of *Dramatis Personae* collected last year. The book will thus bring Yeats' reminiscences down to about the year 1910.

A new magazine, *The Phoenix*, "dedicated to D. H. Lawrence,"

Comment

has been announced for September appearance by James P. Cooney, of Maverick Road, Woodstock, N. Y. It will give voice "to writers who are seeking, as Lawrence did, to start a new way of life by which men of courage and integrity may deliver themselves from the fatal débris of this crumbling civilization, with its deathly drift toward Fascism and Marxian Communism." Contributions are promised from Frieda Lawrence, Aldous Huxley, Richard Aldington, Catherine Carswell, S. Koteliansky, Dorothy Brett, Mabel Dodge Luhan, and other associates of Lawrence. "The main source of the manuscripts is expected, however, to flow from young, unknown writers who are now isolated and obscured by the political and commercial miasma of modern literature."

Miss Nancy Hoyt is collecting the letters of her sister, Elinor Wylie, and will publish them in the near future. All owners of letters are asked to send them to Miss Hale, in care of Alfred A. Knopf, 501 Madison Ave., New York, where they will be copied and carefully returned.

Creative writing courses seem to have become a prosperous summer institution in America, and "writers' conferences" are again being held this year in various parts of the country. Olivet College in Michigan will hold its conference from July 18th to 31st, and offers lectures and conferences by Ford Madox Ford, Allen Tate, Caroline Gordon, Dorothea Brande, Paul Engle, Carl Sandburg, Jean Starr Untermyer, Franklin Meine, Alice Gerstenberg, Grace Hall Hemingway, Kenneth Horan, Nannine Joseph, Glenn Gosling, and Joseph Brewer, an assemblage of advisers who should offer enough variety for anyone's taste.

Another conference, with equal versatility in its personnel, is that at the University of Colorado at Boulder, from July 26th to August 13th. Here Sherwood Anderson, John Peale Bishop, Ford Madox Ford, John Crowe Ransom, Newman Levy, Howard Mumford Jones, Evelyn Scott, Whit Burnett, and the ubiquitous Edward Davison will preside "in a setting of natural grandeur."

The Bread Loaf Writers' Conference will hold its twelfth annual session under the sponsorship of Middlebury College, Vt., from August 18th to September 1st. The staff this year includes Gorham Munson, Theodore Morrison, Paul Green, and Bernard De Voto, and among the visitors will be Robert Frost, Archibald MacLeish, and James T. Farrell.

A recent venture in independent publishing that deserves special commendation is that called *New Directions*, whose books appear

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from Norfolk, Conn., under the editorship of James Laughlin IV. The title of the firm derives from its first volume, *New Directions in Prose and Poetry*, which appeared last fall. This was an anthology of experimental writing, "partially retrospective" (i.e., reprinted from books and periodicals), by such writers as Pound, Cummings, Stevens, Stein, Williams, Marianne Moore, Jolas, and Munson, together with the work of younger writers like Henry Miller, Montagu O'Reilly, Elizabeth Bishop, John Wheelwright, D. C. De Jong, and Dudley Fitts. A 1937 volume is now in preparation. In addition, New Directions has issued several books of single authorship: William Carlos Williams' novel *White Mule*, Robert McAlmon's book of poems *Not Alone Lost*, Dudley Fitts' *Poems 1929-36*, Montagu O'Reilly's "surrealist short story" *Pianos of Sympathy*, and a collection of the work of *Twelve Poets of the Pacific*, edited by Yvor Winters, and containing the work of Yvor Winters, Janet Lewis, Don Stanford, Howard Baker, J. V. Cunningham, Clayton Stafford, Richard Finnegan, James Atkisson, Ann Stanford, Henry Ramsey, Achilles Holt, and Barbara Gibbs. A number of New Directions publications will shortly be reviewed in *POETRY*.

The Alcestis Press, 170 Broadway, New York, is continuing its publication of limited editions of contemporary poetry. Following its first eight volumes, by Wallace Stevens, W. C. Williams, Allen Tate, John Peale Bishop, Robert Penn Warren, and Willard Maas, it is now bringing out books by three younger poets: *Tomorrow's Phoenix* by Ruth Lechlitner, *Mirrored Dead* by George Marion O'Donnell, *The Christmas Tree and the Terror* by David Schubert.

The Macmillan Company has recently published a rare specimen of A. E. Housman's prose — his *Introductory Lecture*, as delivered before the Faculties of University College, London, on October 3, 1892. This lecture, whose theme is "the value of learning for its own sake," was not an inaugural lecture; Housman took his chair in Latin in University College in that year and was chosen, as a new member of the faculty, to open the university year. The lecture was twice before printed, in 1892 for the College and in 1933 for a firm of London booksellers, but only for private circulation.

Students of Keats have been supplied with three important documents by the Oxford University Press. They are the *Letters of Fanny Brawne to Fanny Keats*, the complete correspondence of the woman he loved to his sister, now first published; *The Life of*

Comment

John Keats, by his intimate friend, Charles Armitage Brown, also published for the first time and edited by Dorothy H. Bodurtha and W. B. Pope; and a miscellany, *Some Letters and Miscellanea of Charles Brown*. Brown's *Life* was first delivered as a lecture before the Plymouth Athenaeum in 1830, was refused publication by the *Morning Chronicle*, and was finally left in MS. to the care of Monckton Milnes. A play about Keats, *Aged 26*, has recently been produced briefly in New York, the work of Anne Crawford Flexner, and said to have been remarkable for its sensitive characterization of the poet by Robert Harris; the Oxford Press also publishes this.

We regret a misprint in Allen Tate's article on Philip Horton's *Hart Crane* in our July issue. On page 221, line 18, the word *involved* should read *invoked*; also, the comma at the end of line 17, page 220, should be removed. Mr. Tate's *Selected Poems*, chosen from his three books of verse, will be published in the autumn by Chas. Scribner's Sons.

POETRY has learned with sorrow of the deaths of two of its contributors. Dorothy Cooper, of Cincinnati, whose poem *The Bridge* appears in this issue, died last winter. Her work appeared several times in these pages and showed a talent of sensitive restraint and craftsmanship. And the death of Philip Parker, of Eastbourne, England, whose three poems appeared in our June issue, was announced in a reply which came to our notification of their appearance.

Mr. Paul Eaton Reeve, formerly of New York City, is now living in Chimayo, New Mexico. He attended Columbia University and has contributed to *The New Review*, *The Saturday Review*, and other papers, as well as to POETRY.

Marion Strobel (Mrs. James Herbert Mitchell), of Chicago, is the author of two books of verse, *Once in a Blue Moon* (1925) and *Lost City* (1929), as well as of four novels. In 1928 she was here awarded the Guarantors' Prize, and last November the Oscar Blumenthal Award for Poetry. She served as Associate Editor of POETRY from 1920 until 1925.

Mr. Norman Macleod has lately been residing again in New York, after living in New Mexico and traveling in Europe. His

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latest book of verse is *Thanksgiving Before November* (1926), and he was editorially associated with *Front, Morada*, and other magazines of the past decade.

Mrs. Katharine Kennedy, of Washington, D. C., has been working on the staff of *Indians at Work*, the official organ of the U. S. Indian Service, and as Research Editor of the Indian Rehabilitation Unit. It was in connection with that task that she came across the Zuni legends which she has here rendered into English: "In long and intensive research into Greek and Persian poetry I had found much the same universal note struck as was struck here, but in this Zuni poetry the ingredients were unique—turquoise skies, fire-making songs, corn-grinding songs, moccasin-songs: the mind is filled with a sequence of color and fire and movement." Mrs. Kennedy has published two books of verse, the second, *Music of Morning*, appearing last year. She contributed, as "Penelope Russ," to POETRY when she was still under twenty.

Mr. David Greenhood, now living at Croton on Hudson, N. Y., after long residence in California and New Mexico, is the author of *Poems, et Cetera*, published in 1934 by Helen and Bruce Gentry. He is, like his wife Helen Gentry, a student of bibliography and typography.

Mr. Brewster Ghiselin, an English instructor at the University of Utah, lives at Salt Lake City; Mrs. Winona Montgomery Gilliland (Mrs. Robt. V. G.) at Indianapolis; Miss Marion Louise Bliss at Washta, Iowa; and Mrs. Ethel Davis Romig is on the faculty of English at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

Two of the poets in this issue are new contributors to POETRY: Mr. Harold Meredith Chown was born of English, Irish, and Welsh parentage at Folkstone, England, in 1909. He lived and went to school in or near Paris until he was twelve, then returning to school in England. His higher education was gained at Oriel College, Oxford, and the Sorbonne, where he attended the lectures of Bergson, following which he traveled for several years in Italy, Germany, Greece, Spain, Ireland, and finally America, where he has now settled down to farming and writing at Apponaug, Rhode Island. His present poems are his first to be published.

Mr. Rolf Adriansen, of Oakland, Cal., was born in 1913 at Greenwich, Conn., removing soon thereafter to Kansas City and Oklahoma. He has lately worked in the Civilian Conservation Corps and for the California State Employment Service.

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calls the attention of its friends, subscribers, and contributors to the ways in which they may assist the magazine in achieving a new security, and in celebrating its coming Twenty-fifth Anniversary by planning on another quarter-century of literary distinction and discovery:

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OVER

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—*Ford Madox Ford*

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—*H. L. Mencken*

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Manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped and self-addressed envelope or by international coupons from poets living abroad. Otherwise we must decline however to return them and they will be destroyed.

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P O E T R Y

A MAGAZINE OF VERSE

VOL. L

NO. VI

SEPTEMBER 1937

IN SONG, THE COUNTERSIGN

THE TIDE

AS BREAK the ocean tides on the worn stone,
Valedictory and wan, the morning hours
Dissolve in spray and leave the world alone
Save for the trees' wide bliss, the sudden flowers;

Save for the expectant shadow in my mind
That hopes and trembles fearing to be born
To unaccustomed light and troubling wind,
The sun's derision and the season's scorn.

White tides of heaven, rise until the sea
And sky unite in purging the still thought
Which has deprived me of serenity
And left me trembling, white and overwrought.

Dissolve the mist, dissolve the impious fear
That mars the tide, profanes the patient trees,
Discolors the transparent atmosphere
Until I wade in terror to my knees.

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IN SONG, THE COUNTERSIGN

In Memoriam: D. H. Lawrence

Again that voice intangible as running light
On half awakened tree in early March,
That voice forgotten, heard reluctantly
In dreams that fear the sun, and waking flee.

The songs of sirens are not half so sweet,
So fraught with secret danger, so beguiling:
Where shall we run? where is that warm retreat?
Where can we stop our eyes and calm our minds?
Oh singing cease! nor draw our unwilling feet
Through the fleet wilderness, dryshod on the wild sea.

No, let us drown in music and resign
Our hearts, our souls, our loves, to the wide waters,
Following the song that leaves the strong will weak,
The forgotten hope, the disastrous dream to seek
The lost music, life's rich countersign.

Now come the maidens to the water's edge
And throw their wreaths away, they wade in starlight;
Now the young men follow, eager and swift,
Lifting their voices through the dew-damp sedge,
And through the heavy woods, the embowered night
One voice, one melody, sweet, drowned and faint
Is cool in summer's heat, in darkness bright.

Marya Zaturenska

So are our vanquished bodies cast ashore
And empty are our eyes, empty our arms,
And the sharp raptures in our hearts no more.
Our little deaths are swallowed by the sun ;
Our aspirations, longings and alarms
Are drawn into sleep's vast felicity :
Oh, not love's martyrs, or life's victims we.

Recorders on bleak stone, symbols of vaster dreams,
Lovers of love, expounders of the blood
Who breathed and floundered in the living flood
Of fine-drawn liquid air, of flowing light.
The perilous mountains lured us through the night
And the remote white voices far away
Until the day seemed night, the night seemed day.
We sink, we drown, in bottomless lost streams.

THE MESSENGER

So on one night he came,
And left upon my breast
Engraved in sharpest flame,
The words on which I rest.

The seasons and the sky
Grew far too still and clear
Who heard the trumpet cry
In that heroic year.

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The broken bread, the wine
Whose simple mystery
Man's curious thoughts refine
Into a vaster law
I saw.

Till the small house took light
And shone enlarged and tall
In every glittering wall
That faced the night.

For that prized messenger,
Who for a little while
Revealed his haunted face,
I write, I shape my style.

And let it be as pure
As that unearthly brow
Whose words I study now
And keep secure.

To love the truth, to shield
Its hard and lonely way,
To choose the stark defeat,
Rather than seek retreat
When it is well to yield.

Marya Zaturenska

UNVEIL THE AUTUMN

While summer's loosened sun-enamoured hair
And bright abstracted green
Pallor, and starry sheen
Envelops us as the warm seasons fade
Into a cooler shade,
Then flows upon the lawn
The golden signal, the red leaf, the autumn's messenger,
Glad Goddess winged with morning and cloud born
Whose snowy feet the celestial meadows stir
Herald this day with russet, yellow and brown
And in full season scatter the harvest down
While deepening thought on the calmed heaven grows.

Dispelled is the wild legend of the rose
But light pours from the heaven, hopes fall from the
sky.

Strange the migrating birds' departing cry
And softly, lightly, now less ardently
We face a world robbed of the sun's glare,
Now with the heart to see,
Not with the blinded brain
Nor with the limited eyes' impassioned stare
Too weak to pierce the growing mystery
Of time, and change, and the fast withering tree.

Marya Zaturenska

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TAHOE REMEMBRANCE

Forests too rich with light, too sweet with the morning smell
of tamarack and manzanita-clusters,
lean to our eyes, lean to Tahoe lake,
dripping the lovely images, dripping reflections,
until remembrance is a silver and transparent pool,
and Tahoe water gathers the woods and the morning
into a green and cobalt lens of the world.

Does earth remember? Are valleys inhuman nerves
down which river-currents, slapping against rocks,
slip silver counterparts of those electric riptides
that rush a sentiency in us across molecular boulders?
Is the round world whole a slow recorder,
weaving remembered dreams from mountain to mountain
in rhythms apt to its headlong private-flowing time,
yet slowly imperceptible
to the silver and transparent lens of our mind?
Then Tahoe remembers. The Sierra Nevada remembers.
The spruce and redwood are frail antennae
of some transcendent network of remembrance
what ocean was, when it glassed a roof
of aching tons congealed to darkness,
ambered around impounded dynamo fishes
with rainbows of lacquered light along belly and feelers.
But that, may be, is dim as the backward glance of age
on youth. Nearer is yearlong peace on Tahoe, on this great

Axton Clark

flexible drop of dew, whose surface, filled with sky,
prolongs the centuries of level loveliness.

Or is the memory here a child's, each day transposed
by fresh recordings tumbling on a mind
whose new leaves sway in chlorophyllic joy
to imprints of the sun?

With child delight, Tahoe recalls
adventurous ore in pans shaken by thirst for Golconda ;
with a child's uncruel nescience, Tahoe recalls
falsetto whoops and blue-bandanna'd miners
out for a hanging and for raw White Mule,
somewhere in live-oaks skirting Hangtown.

That, yesterday. And just the other day
(perhaps the lake was sleeping, and the sound came vague,
stirring the lifted curtain of a dream)

low guttural voices fell
in not quite speech on not yet Indian ears ;
perhaps a cry of horror stabbed the night,
echoing centured back to speak for all
the age that had no voice to speak itself,
echoing down to the giant hammers on steel,
so otherday, and yesterday, today,
are all irrelevantly drawn, through one brief relevance,
into an evanescent scream of fear and pain.

Do not remember that, Tahoe,
do not remember that alone !
Do not hear only that extracted grief

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magnified by our days into uncounted murderous grievings!
Do not hear only the voices
of millions killed by trinitrotoluol;
their bodies burst, their lungs eaten!
Do not hear only the champing of conquered machines
thrown into the counterpoint of ourselves not yet conquered,
ourselves who have wombed fruitful monsters
and live not knowing how to rescue fruit for the fruitless!
We not past days, for you, a candle before the dawn
against the enormous years to come?
Instruct your pine antennae and your rivered grooves
not to remember like a child, focussing, with the lens of fear,
candle's flicker to a scorching point.
The iris of your mirror eye reflects
the paralytic staring from his launch,
and still reflects the girl at the spring-board tip,
whose body, hands upthrust, is a flame in her scarlet suit.
If there is hope the future may beat down
rief, and the violence of dexterous fools,
and gruff delinquency in the enforcer or the enforced,
tune the wave-lengths of remembrance, Tahoe,
t torture if you must: but mark those days
then the blow-torch of the mind burns out mind's slag,
and welds the fractured rancor back to structural peace!
With all your youth hold fast the bougainvillea and hibiscus
petals
that were the flakes of light sealed into fishes' sides,
our birds of deep-sea paradise!

Axton Clark

Hold fast all lucent things remembering sun !
When aeoned age has shrunk your level face,
and all memorial grooves are worn from semblance by their
 own quick streams ;
when these ecstatic centuries to come fall back unkempt,
leaving you few brief flashes of this far first youth :
they shall be rich with light and sweet with the ocean smell
of tarweed and the musk of pines after rain.
And if the million-generationed sons of our blood
should come and find you still embodied here,
and know some skill to force your deep reserve :
lift them a moment from their day, and let them be
a memory to themselves, as we
are this remembrance at your side ;
and let them find in secret waters, Tahoe,
how much was lovely, these lost years.
Deep in your drowsy level let remembrance meet
clear drops of being, cupped in the slope of time :
our silver and transparent hours of peace
merged in your silver and transparent dream of age.

Axton Clark

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TRAFFIC

NOON ON ALAMEDA STREET

Sun, when it shines on traffic, has a look
Of loaded radiance that might explode,
Yet keeps its kindle like a meaning known
Only to motors in the city road,

Only to fury lifted of all horns
Mourning on themselves a thing to come,
For we have heard delirium in a claxon,
Seen revelation lit on chromium.

On Alameda Street the earth is turning
Secret among old sewers and their kind:
The voice of men among machines at noon
Comes like a sigh from history to the mind,

For in this noon there is no light like light,
(Oh, tell us, dark on asphalt, of the sun)
But brightness spawning in a dirty glass,
But fever smoking at meridian,

But men and women riding in their graves
With hands upon a wheel they cannot keep
Clear in the rapt confusion of the crowd,
 Crowd and the fate of motion and of sleep.

Hildegarde Flanner

HE MAY COME LATE

Crash, and if you must, in your own breast,
Where all your crying may be loud but shut,
And no one hears the running of your grief,
Big but decent in a hidden rut.

Break, but if you do, display a peace
And let it lie there positive and plain,
Then even the closest mother could not tell
That all the blood to bear you was in vain.

Must, and make it simple, no self-pity.
Let every tear roll inward far away
And trackless on the floating of your face,
Open without a quiver to the day.

It can be done, whose can is yours to do,
Nor cry to any God's God of your fate.
Who takes you up and lays you in his arm
Is your own courage: and He may come late.

MOON AND MOTOR

The glide of moon along my fenders flowing
Is like a motion milking upon light,
So rapt and pallid does it lap and draw
From silver sources crescent with the night.
The earth is pouring off her liquid miles
Whose waterless water is the way I feel
Coursing on the desert, every sense

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Collected and yet fluid at the wheel.
While cylinder and floating cylinder
So perfectly receive the plunge of power
That night, and rumors of capacious night,
Time's own, the frictionless, anointed hour
Wait on the motor mystical that drives,
Lean to the fury lovely and repose
That are the piston's plunder and the sum
Of tranquil labor that an engine knows.

Hildegard Flanner

SABOTAGE

Well, fellow, when you travel (by lands, by seas
by air; at night or day) and know palace
or hovel where I might meet you there, you ease
away. You never could unravel the lies
you would prepare, if I should say how guys
had heard the cavil, and that you should beware
of my dismay far more than of your malice.

Why will you slip the meeting? I have no dreams
of you, no fears, no plea; yet you dread to face
my greeting. Is my suspicion true? It seems
to be. Dislikes and likes repeating, we'd sit
a whole day through; yet miserly in glut,
even to cheating yourself by a taboo
on company, you sap friendship's abundant base.

John Wheelwright

TWO GARDENS

THE CHOICE

In ribs' hollow we have held
Michael the Angel, like the Spartan's fox,
by whose unpropitiated sword
from what paradise are we now excluded?

We have borne our sons among the rocks,
our sons conceived in Eden. Our eldest, belled
like a cat that hunts for birds, exiled, denuded
of all comfort and companion, with the horde
of locusts overhead, and underfoot the sands.
In what oasis shall he cleanse his hands?

A desert and a garden in one breast
and always the hard choice to make,
while voices whisper "*This is best.*"
The white wing and the black of angels shake
the noon's repose but no eye can seize
their message, lost among the olive trees.
With guidance fleeting and obscure
who then bewildered can be sure
what simple acquiescence leads to blood
of brothers, or to universal flood?

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A FLOWER PIECE

On a garden containing an ornamental bronze bat

Sometimes Flora in mossy hat
dissolves her lifted marble palms
in sky and birdsong. Sometimes a bat
(since Flora, living, walks the paths)
to any wicked heart strikes qualms.

Guardian of the garden, he
defends with brazen beak the mystery.

All riddle of the leaf and stem untwining,
the ivy vine upon the wall reclining,
all gossip of the marigold, the wraths
of foolish rose among the roses living,
Hyacinth dead too young, who should have known
Chrysanthemum, alas, alone —
two lovers by a summer parted —
the foxglove and the dapper lily giving
vows to one another by the bees,
the mignonette that only whispers "please,"
the tragic fuschia brokenhearted,
the honeysuckle like a perfumed lout
sprawled on the lawn with shirt-tail out.

But Nemesis is armed with shears
sharp to snip the smooth or thorny stalk,
so suddenly the smiling and the tears

Robert Morse

lie a cut flower on the garden walk.

Yet when Flora with her basket comes
not even greenest buds would willingly say "No,"
but stretch their tender necks for Flora's thumbs
and gentle fingertips to break, and show
with vanity their full-dress uniform.

Of seven roses all the seven
abandon roots in hope of heaven.

Thus reason they: "How soon the worm
and autumn are our lot! This lady is both wise and
good —

let her take now what soon the winter would."

Robert Morse

UNCONSENTING

How is it that the aged
Whose years are sharp upon them,
The conflict being waged
And chaos having won them

So dread to lay life's sword,
All worn, into its sheath,
Their eyes so sadly toward
Sure victory in death?

Richard Leon Spain

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MEDIO IN AMORE

I

And what if August come not once again
To you and me forever and forever?
This day at least lies stubborn on the brain.
This utmost day at least, my liege, my lover,
The dubious heavens extend miraculous
Our franchise on the perfect sun and clover.
How scarlet and how multitudinous
The hours burn like fiery Cherubim;
Fabulous are the blue walls over us.
Now utterly is summer at the brim;
Let but another hour of sunlight pour
And all this light must overflow the rim.
If unto you and me, my liege, no more
Shall August come who came so oft before
This day we pierce all Augests to the core.

II

This hour is perpendicular with fruit;
Big is the fruit it showers in our lap.
None passing knows how swift the faithless root
Draws to itself again the coward sap.
None passing knows. Yet inwardly must we
Trace on the treachery of summer's map

Kathryn Worth

Our boundaries of green. Now niggardly
We count our emerald borders up, and say :
“So much and so of bright geography
Remaineth yet for our transversal way.”
Yet all the while, mocking our brief renown,
Summer yet greens the land ; and day by day
Ripely unrolled in candid unison
Our frugal counties glitter in the sun.

III

Sharp on our dwindling tongues must burn this hour
The flat and amiable seed of the pomegranate.
Now simple water could instruct the flower
Such honey that no chary bee might spurn it.
Our tongues confess they straitly do unlearn
Their gall and vinegar ; minute by minute
They do unlearn their sweet ; their sours return
Unto the lime and tart persimmon tree.
We who held simple mouth in richest scorn
Bend now at last in mute humility,
Considering how costly even must taste
The bitter unto those who have no power to see
If sweet or sour or bitter does invest
The quiet tongue within the body's hearse.

Kathryn Worth

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THIS HILL OF STONES

I

Not in this ground, not on this hill of stones
Shall the root be ever at rest —

The wild pear that breaks from the flinty slope
Is sharp to the questing tongue.

Thorn-apple, writhing and insidiously stinging,
Is of no tangible worth, is of no earthly good,
Save that its slim stems cover the bitter ground.

There is no sweetness here,
Neither of soil nor of measurable growth ;
No wonder breaks from the high-ground in lance-points of
color.

Lest the heart sink leadenly and the mind grow bitter
On its hill of stones
The wide sky and the high air burgeon with promise,
Naming the uncountable winds and the horizon's curve.
Monotones of dwarf pine and the straggle of blackthorn
Shadow the pure blue granite.

There is no flurry here, neither of growth nor of color ;
Only the groping root and the incessant struggle for freedom ;
Matching the stone and the white, clear presence of wonder —
An invisible growth of soul.

V. James Chrasta

II

Lay him to sleep and the blackthorn above him
 spreading its sinuous tendrils shall be sweet ;
More lovely and less painful now in his sight
Is its conceded right.

He that has too long stayed awake in the long dark
 tracing the thorn's formidable line
Is at rest, is too utterly tired to rise —
Cover his hollow eyes.
Deeply now, let the gaunt face and the hard hands
Be forever at rest.

It is best.

Better that he should lie in this certain place
Than waken a careworn face
To this incessant toil . . .

The granite of him shall lie
Under a watchful sky,
And the strange winds passing by
Finger the weaving thorn,
The blighted, untended corn.

V. James Chrasta

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THIS SINGLE HOUR

BY A NAMELESS LAKE

Hush . . . so faint a sound
 Could rend the night in two!
Quiet, far-off hound!
 Dove, your plaintive coo,

To my prayerful ear
 Might be silence sighing.
Oh, how near — how near
 To earth where I am lying,

Move the constellations!
 How unfledged and odd
Are my speculations
 About space and God . . .

Splash the water, fish.
 Stir the pine-tops, breeze.
Silence folds about
 Fragile sounds like these.

SCRUB GROWTH

This growth of brick and stone and steel
Standing in crazy rows,
These stalks that bear no boughs, no leaves,
This field that nightly glows

Clara Williams Smith

With fiery bloom — this patch of space
That men have sown — will leave no trace
Of brittle stem or wonder flower:
They flourish for this single hour
Of Earth's long day — then what remains
Of forests of bright window panes?

"VATS OF GOLDEN SOUP"

Edmund Wilson

These bones from which the flesh is torn away,
These gruesome leavings of old motor cars,
These bent and broken fenders, wheels and bars
Fed to the roaring furnaces — are they
The bats and toads and lizards, let us say,
Of new magicians — brawny avatars,
Possessed of power and wisdom from the stars,
Who make ten thousand tons of steel a day?

Or can it be as in the long ago
When altar-fires of Yaweh, Ammon, Thor
Were fed with bloody sacrifice? But, no!
This god has priests and fire, yet none adore
His majesty; and though men bring him gold,
They want it back again an hundredfold.

Clara Williams Smith

NEVER BEFORE

Never before, I swear
did sun flash so superbly
spreading out generous yellow
into the lids of my eyes.

Never before the keen stretch
of snowsound to my soles
crunched up, folding, swirling,
running white tide to my ankles,
fleecing cold sea to my feet.

Never before the subway,
so noise-happy chugging in joy,
panting and leaping quick danger
shriek-laughing, tumbling merrily on.

Never before such faces
crowding with beauty the earth —
lean, plump, wrinkled, untouched,
the mother, the machine slave, the dissipate,
the pure, the wearied, the indifferent,
the young girl dreaming again of her lover
(he came with such gladdening arms)
the weak and the gentle, the hungry,
the suffering, the insomniac,
the little boys with high squeaky voices
(they look out calm unperturbed,
they see all, unabashed, unaffected) . . .

Martha Millet

Never before did I feel them
so close to me, warm to me
crowding me with their beauty,
the sun splitting down on my shoulders and sides,
the earth moving under my feet,
myself marvelling.

Martha Millet

TAKE CARE!

Now that forsythia hangs pendulous beside the sun dial,
And the magnolia not yet uncurling, lifts her white thumbs
Like almonds peeled to the quick;
I am become a precious and a thin-blown phial
Holding an essence sweeter far than crumbs
Of honeycomb. Approach me gently. Never a flick
Of finger lay upon me, lest this wine
Mount in the vase, and by no will of mine
But its own heady substance gathering,
Burst its frail sheath, and spatter you with Spring!

Agnes D. Moore

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DEVOTIONAL

Close fast your eyes
and feel the bitter air
glim down glim down
with silver netted frost
and whisper in despair.
Your lover dies
and all and all is lost. . . .

Close fast your heart
and feel the piercing night
succumb succumb
with silence overcome
and naked bats with flutter start
offering sacrament to light
and pirring endless screechy fright. . . .

Then part your lips
and make your tongue move up
move down and words to slip
and say All is not lost.
This silver net of frost
shall be a diadem
and on the soul of night
I yet may sup. . . .

All is not lost. . . .

Ralph de Toledano

You hold the bleeding gem
and close your eyes
whispering Lover never dies. . . .

Ralph de Toledano

“BUT WHEN I BECAME A MAN. . . .”

Now, being grown, I put away
The childish things that are no child's;
Such as the thought that what men say
Can shrive them against natal wilds,
Such as the fear that others know
The secret hidden from my hope,
Such as the terror lest men grow
In age, remaining dwarfs in scope.

Distinguished behind fogs of glass,
Self-laurelled for a state attained,
I sit and think the hours that pass
Admire the way my glass is stained.
And all the time those hours' eyes,
Unused to man's small shifts of sort,
Not noticing my mind and size,
Name me a child in their report.

Raymond Holden

THE YOUNG MAN LOST

For Dorothy Babb

BIOGRAPHY

There was no end of sadness.
When winter came and sprawled over
The trees and houses, a man rose from
His sleep and kissed his wife who wept.
A child was born. Delicately the film
Of his life unfolded like a coral sea,
Where stone is a hard substance of wind
And water leaking into memory like pain.
He was a young man. He looked at himself
Through a glass that was too real to image
His face, unreal before his eyes. These were vivid
To the hands; these were too real
To the hearts that bled to sustain life.
He was a man. And the sun that leaped
Into his eyes, the grass beneath his feet
That walked cobbled streets, the cities —
All were a challenge to his imagination:
But his mother decaying in a nameless grave,
And his father watching a changing world
Through iron bars, and his broken childhood,
Were as real as pain locking memory.

Carl Bulosan

NIGHT PIECE

Mysterious, profound, mute,
The night sprawls under the moonlight —
Knotless cables tied to the streets,
Synergy of truth ever present, giving
Time to what Hope delays!
O City of strangled throats and deep-set eyes,
Give meaning to the muffled cry of millions
Who perish behind screened windows, answer
The namelessness of these young faces!

We have touched the moonlight,
As if drawn together by the silence of stars!
Drawn together by the weight of our loneliness!
And our fear fled into nothingness;
Became our faith wrapped in moonlight —
Remembered beauty salvaged from the ruins
Of our scattered births!

Who can unfasten the moonlight . . . ?

NEEDING NO TIME

Needing no time for mourning over
Vanished splendors, the future receives
Us into its inner reality where
The movietone of memory is a mimicry
Of gleaming cities and other discoveries;

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Where the past is a sunset of pale clouds
Consumed by history now buried in the ages.
We stand in a sunset and gawk at the sun,
Choking ourselves with our dusty cries.
We want the past to jump into our pockets,
We want to jingle it at our pleasure, knowing
That this is the way life clings to love,
This is the way faith comes to life —
A perfume spreading in the spreading day.
The flight of hours into the year tells
Us that the past is a heap of burned leaves,
And we cannot have it with empty hands
Clutching at the fugitive winds of earth,
Cannot want it in our march into the morning.
The past is past, and we cannot remake it.
If we cannot remake it, we do not need it.
If we do not need it, there is nothing to fear.
If there is nothing to fear, it is worth destroying
The future is for hoping, and we want it.
If we want it, we can have it.
If we can have it, it is all.
If it is all, it is worth fighting for it.
This is the way we face the coming day.
This is the way we stand in the sunset
And gawk at the sun, needing no time
For mourning in our march into the morning.

Carl Bulosan

THE PHOENIX

Gigantic buildings of our day,
Tall towers that the winds know,
Dark Flower! betray
This secret and my sorrow....

Into the streets of sheltered rooms,
Where sleepers sleep with grief,
Where night looms
Majestically like death;

O Dark Mother, mute with pity,
Creep in with a new faith
And tell us what glory
Is there on the earth of bleached

Bodies and choked mirth:
My faith nailed to the wall
Of my strange birth —
Phoenix carved in my soul!

Carl Bulosan

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AN AMERICAN CRITIC

THE career of Paul Elmer More, which ended with his death last spring, is probably the best example on record of the doubts and perils, the thankless risks and anomalous responsibilities, that fall to the lot of the man who undertakes to become a critic in America. When More, recognizing his incapacity for writing poetry and seeing his deficiencies as a college teacher, went into retirement in 1904 by renting "a dilapidated little farm-house near the village of Shelburne, N. H., that lies along the peaceful valley of the Androscoggin," he was justly aware that no fellow-citizen had yet faced the ambition of becoming, in a complete and dedicated sense, a critic of literature. He was further handicapped by the existing confusion, both in America and in Europe, as to what the modern function of such a person should be. A more discouraging moment for taking art seriously can hardly be found in literary history. America had seen several notable critical talents, but they were usually subdued by ethical and prophetic aims, as in Emerson and Whitman, or subordinated to incidental practice by creative purposes, as in Poe, Lowell, and James; and the prevailing dictators in the fields of journalism or academic prestige — men of the respectable stamp of Winter, Brownell, Matthews, and Woodbury, or of the genteel uselessness of Mabie and Van Dyke — must have been embarrassing models for an apprentice with More's education, who had read Sainte-Beuve and Renan as well as their classic

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ancestors, who was aware of the experimental disturbances going on abroad, and who had not yet lost his early instinct for imaginative art.

As one reads the preface which More wrote two years ago for a book of *Selected Shelburne Essays* in the World's Classic Series (Oxford University Press), one gets a sense of his distinct and serious isolation in the American scene, his disinclination to find his rewards abroad like Henry James, his hope of bringing about an alliance between America's moral traditions and her artistic hopes, and his effort to assemble from the doctrines of Arnold and Pater, Taine and Renan, Nietzsche, France, and even Oscar Wilde the working principles of his craft. This isolation of More's becomes even more creditable when we are reminded, as recently by Mr. Eliot, that there was at that time no literary "situation" of any serious character in either America or England. The profession of literature was weathering its bleakest hour. The esthetic stirrings of the Nineties had been sharply reproved; the new realism was suffering revision; talents who were incapable of making a deal with journalism were cut off from public favor; critical journals were almost non-existent; there were probably less than a handful of men in America who were willing or able to talk about writing as a serious occupation, and of these Howells was slowly falling prey to age and official dignity and a few others like Gates and Brownell were too much engrossed by academic or social tact to endanger themselves by too deep an immersion in the historical tradition or the living hazards of art.

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In this dead pocket of the Nineteen-hundreds More showed his mettle by retreating to New Hampshire, and the years he spent there, between his early academic and his later editorial labors, should be honored as a model of discipline and resolution for the critically ambitious. He then produced what are still his best essays — those on Gissing, Hearn, and Christina Rossetti, and his first appraisals of American types like Edwards and Thoreau who were later to provide the material for one of his best books, *A New England Group*. But there was a more deluding influence in the air than any of the above-named negative forces, and it was the one with which More never came fully to grips and that finally victimized him.

It was the belief that the criticism of literature finds its first implements in moral doctrine and social values, that it is primarily a phase of philosophic study, and that it must be schooled by ideas and traditions instead of by sensibility and the craft of language. This was the condition that made esthetic conversation so painful for Henry James when he revisited the United States in 1904, even so long after his early conviction about the moral obligations of criticism had reached its maturity. It was the same belief that bent and finally decided the growth of More's appreciative powers. As one reads his introductory essay on *Criticism*, one can have nothing but respect for the purposes defined in it — his belief that the easy virtues of critical impressionism were too loose a glove for any accurate hand to wear; his equal suspicion that the historical canons of Taine and Arnold

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would result chiefly in using "the past too much as a dead storehouse of precepts for schoolmastering the present"; his sense that unless criticism takes part in the "education" of the public and thus in raising the level of taste and sensibility, it remains either a personal indulgence or a craftsman's textbook; and his general conviction that "the critical spirit" must form a part of any scholarship or culture that is to produce intelligent results.

These were teachings of which the American public then stood—and still stands—in the direst need. No one can fail to regret that More, with his honest sympathies, his exceptional energy, and his high erudition, should have allowed them to fall into the pedantry and formulation he initially deplored; that he slowly but surely alienated himself from his original insight; that he substituted a didactic for a critical method (though always less rigidly so than his colleague Irving Babbitt); and that he finally resigned from critical activity, became a student of ethics and religions, and tutored the Humanists who simplified or vulgarized much of what was best in his work. In the end he maintained almost no contact, and little prestige, in the literary scene. Although some of his best literary exposition appears in his last book, *On Being Human* of 1936 (Princeton University Press), his reputation was finally outdone by the hostility his disciples had stirred up among contemporary writers.

There was doubtless from the beginning a temperamental handicap in More's critical work—a sensible coldness, a

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moral prejudice, a fear of novelty, and a reluctance to meet the artist half way — and he hardened with it. This accounts for the difference between such early studies as the Hearn and Gissing essays and his final hostile baitings of Proust and Joyce. It was his inelastic rigor in applying ethical judgments that finally led him to repudiate those major achievements of our time which, whatever their failures or defects, would really have supported his position more dramatically and profoundly than the discreet and formulated productions he often held up to admiration. In his early essay on *Shelley* may be found observations on the problems of romanticism quite as cogent as anything Eliot or Valéry has recently uttered, but in his recent essay on Joyce these come to little but doctrinaire sterility, and make his dispute with Eliot about the value of *Ulysses* a fiasco of unreconciled terms and unreconcilable insights. But as we look longer into More's work, we realize that his shortcomings were by no means a matter of temperamental and ethical prejudice alone. They were inherent in the American tradition in which he worked, and in the reluctance of that tradition (even today) to recognize the nature of the literary art or the critical equipment necessary to define it. More's career is a shining example of how hard America makes it for a man to become, develop, and remain a literary critic. The critical talents who have followed him demonstrate this ordeal quite as visibly as he did. They have been expected and required to be almost everything but what their title implies. They have been put to work as patriots and peda-

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gogues, moralists and reformers, social workers and political revolutionists. They turn aside to write biographies and histories. They have learned quantities of theory and doctrine; they have alternately "Americanized" and "debunked" the native literature; they have participated in mass-movements and in the momentary *Zeitgeist* that is now allowed ten years at most to flit its course. They have been so vigorously scolded about their duty of keeping literature from running to preciosity and sterility through divorce from real life, that it requires some courage to remember how, in spite of contrasting reprimands about his esthetic shortcomings from men like James, Spingarn, and Santayana, the average American critic has hardly learned the crudest fundamentals of his craft, and is readily identified with the heroes of such dismal recitals of literary experience as Carl van Doren's recent autobiography, *Three Worlds*, and Burton Rascoe's *Before I Forget*. And the fate that overtook More's critical intelligence might not have been met at all for all the good its lesson has done to the critical arbiters of the present decade, whose formulations of social theory are reducing a large share of criticism to quite as great a crudity, and quite as blind a determinism, as the men of More's generation were guilty of. Whatever is gained in nearness to life by this tendency is being sacrificed by distance from and confusion about art, and by a failure to recognize the fact that there has probably never been devised a severer test of the validity of social or ethical values than the validity of the work of art in which such values are embodied and expressed.

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As we look back on the American critics who have succeeded More during the past quarter-century, we find several who had a stricter knowledge of critical duty than he had, and some who practiced it; several whose realistic and appreciative faculties were greatly above his; but few who have practiced as energetically or faced as responsibly (even if as faultily) as he did the full obligations of criticism. Critical intelligence has greatly advanced, and the present temper of critics has matured through the esthetic sympathy and social consciousness that More fell short of, but compared with his, their work has remained fragmentary, topical, suspicious of principle, and consequently piecemeal in its results. There are four or five living critics who may be equipped to improve on More's ambition to be the American Sainte-Beuve, but they have veered away from the risk of committing that ideal to the form of books. His work was incomplete and many of his conclusions mistaken, but he deserves present honor if only because he gave his contemporaries a model, hitherto missing in America, to improve — and because so few of them have shown his energy and ambition in seizing the opportunity.

M. D. Z.

THE POEMS OF FORD MADOX FORD

Though the *Collected Poems* of Ford Madox Ford now appear for the first time in an American edition,¹ it is not the first volume of that title to be published. *A Preface to*

¹*Collected Poems*, by Ford Madox Ford. Oxford University Press.

The Poems of Ford Madox Ford

Collected Poems, dated 1911, is here reprinted, with some apology for the frivolity of its tone, none for its opinions. This is as it should be. For if it is hard not to resent the patronizing attitude which Mr. Ford then took toward William Butler Yeats, it must be allowed him that, while his own poetic art shows a sure consistent gain down through the war period, there is, from first to last, no essential change in his point of view. In 1914 there was an English edition of *Collected Poems* which was reissued in 1916. The present volume gathers together all that Mr. Ford has written in verse, from *The Wind's Quest*, his first poem, printed in 1891, through *Buckshee: Last Poems*, finished in Paris only last year. His famous *On Heaven*, which first appeared in *POETRY* in 1914, has here its pride of place, and is followed by the equally unforgettable *Antwerp*. From these two poems we are led, in the familiar Ford manner, back and forth through time until we have covered a career of forty-five years.

Mr. Ford's position as a poet has been somewhat overtopped by his place as a writer of prose. For it has been his fortune—and it is this that has won him, in so many cities and in more than one country, the esteem and affection of many writers younger than he—to insist upon the professional attitude. He has done it by precept and, more importantly, by example. The novelist might, as he so often told us, practice a *métier du chien*. It was still a *métier*. And nothing less than a complete consciousness of the craft would do. Of course, he was not alone among

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his contemporaries in holding that the French had a far finer and fuller sense of what it meant to construct a novel than the English; around the turn of the century there were not a few who spoke and wrote his language and like him followed the cult of conscience, ready at any instant to call upon Flaubert as their only saint. But of them none survive who has proved more constant to that faith; none was ever more devout than Ford Madox Ford.

His approach to the novel is in the French manner. But when it comes to poetry, Mr. Ford would have us believe that he is a man of England. It is a country where, as a living French poet has observed, poems grow like grass,—that is to say with apparent ease and an incomparable freshness, secretly sustained by centuries of care. Ford Madox Ford disclaims too profound a concern with poetry, either his own, or others'. If, when he starts a novel, he knows from beginning to the end just how each word is to be placed, he knows—or so he says—practically nothing of how his poems are made. They come to him—a little tune in the head, then words, and then more words, on paper. How should he say if they are good or bad? He has read so little poetry. When he opens the morning paper, it is to turn first to the cricket scores.

This need not really deceive us. Like Congreve, who told Voltaire he did not wish to be visited as a dramatist, Mr. Ford, the poet, prefers to be thought of as among the country gentlemen. Their class, it might be remembered, has made no small contribution to English literature.

The Poems of Ford Madox Ford

Before the War came, Mr. Ford was able to bring to the writing of verse not only the skill and scrupulousness which have distinguished his best novels, but also a good many tricks of his conscious trade. There are, from first to last in his work, poems which have the April spontaneity of grass; but they are not his best poems. At his best, he will be found almost invariably not to have departed too far from his methods in prose. This discourse which is a record of his own emotions and is meant, too, to record the contemporary world; which is so realistic on the surface, so romantic in its depths; which is never so pleased as when adding one discordant passage to another; which slides as smoothly as a *Wagon-Lit* from place to place, and at dead of night from a known country to one that is strange; which is careless with the years and indifferent to the clock as memory is: where have we encountered it before? The verse has a strong, insistent, uneven beat; the rhymes arrive unexpectedly. But this cosmopolitan speech, whose English slips so readily into a French or a German phrase, which pauses scarcely an instant and with only a touch of superiority before it turns to slang: where did it come from — if not from the prose of Ford Madox Ford? When he began writing verse, it was under those influences which a young Englishman of independent tastes might have been expected to feel just before the close of the last century. They were soon discarded. Mr. Ford's own manner seems to have been rather easily come by; it has been worn since with comfortable assurance, like an old country-coat of good cut

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and the best tweed. If at times something in a poem reminds us of one of his contemporaries, that is only because his aim and theirs happen to coincide.

Mr. Ford's contribution to the poetry of his time was to assist in bringing it nearer to the art of prose. It was, when he did it, a necessary thing to do. There were others; Ezra Pound also knew that if poetry was to live and not die in a living and dying world, it must, in his own phrase, catch up with prose; but none of the others knew so much about prose as Ford Madox Ford did.

It is thus that poetry has always been renewed. Jules Romains, in his recent *Preface à l'Homme Blanc*, reminds us that it was so in France, for as late as his own boyhood the charge he constantly heard levelled against Victor Hugo was one of *prosaïsme*, while in the *lycées* Baudelaire was still referred to as a *prosateur froid et alambique*. When the Muse's sandal is bound too strictly, there is nothing for her to do but loosen it and for a time go barefoot. When too much that he sees about him in the world is forbidden to the poet there is nothing he can do but lay violent hands on the immense matter of prose and seize whatever he thinks he can appropriate.

So little is now forbidden, that it is not altogether easy for us to conceive how difficult this was for an English poet in the decade before the War. Mr. Ford could conclude a poem on the death of Queen Victoria with these straightforward lines:

The Poems of Ford Madox Ford

A shock,
A change in the beat of the clock,
And the ultimate change that we fear feels
a little less far.

But he had to go through no small amount of rather facile poetizing —

Keep your brooding sorrows for dewy misty hollows,
Here's blue sky and lark song, drink the air —

before he could come to

This is Charing Cross:
It is midnight;
There is a great crowd
And no light.

And it is precisely because there were difficulties to be surmounted that there remains so much that is tough and enduring in these poems, despite their constant use of not too particular sentiment.

They await the lost.
They await the lost that shall never leave the dock;
They await the lost that shall never come again
 by the train
To the embraces of all these women with dead faces;
They await the lost who lie dead in trench and
 barrier and foss,
In the dark of the night.
This is Charing Cross; it is past one of the clock;
There is very little light.
There is so much pain.

This gives, as does no other poem, the feel of a great London in the midst of the war. And more than that, *Antwerp* remains one of the distinguished poems of our time.

John Peale Bishop

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REVIEWS

AN ENGLISH INSTANCE

The Disappearing Castle, by Charles Madge. London: Faber & Faber.

For a number of years now, to keep up the pretense of an English poetic renaissance, it has been necessary for critics and readers who have been unable to admit that enthusiasm sometimes wanes, and that performances have fallen short of predictions, to fortify their reputations with new names in place of the old ones. Not that there is less honesty than before, but a legend has been created, and it is difficult to let it go.

Now that Charles Madge, whose name has been prominent in the group of younger writers since 1933, has published his first book, the problem shows itself again, but more forcefully. Readers have been led to expect a finished performance on a par with that of MacNeice or Auden, and when they find that it is not there, Madge may be hurriedly dismissed as unimportant, as another bad guess, and never bothered with again.

There are no poems in *The Disappearing Castle* which are completely satisfying, but that does not make an excuse for final judgments. What there is, and this is something very good and likely to be overlooked, is a continual growth, and an unwillingness to let a once-mastered method overrule the possibilities in further experimentation. The latter would admit the inference of too great spread, were it not

An English Instance

for a general solidification and deepening in the more recent poems. The poems are arranged in chronological order, the first dated "May, 1933," the last probably written about the turn of the present year. In the first poem, *On Awakening*, the extreme influence of Hopkins has been modified by an awareness of the values of surrealism, an awareness which is developed and re-shaped constantly through such poems as *The Hours of the Planets*, *The Birds of Tin*, and *Obsessional*, attempts which are only partly successful because there is too little communication.

O reich of riches, urbs of all superb,
When will you break your banks? The vague of water
Is everywhere afar and every weir
Life likening to its opponent, and susurrus
Of the grey-haired waterfall.

For this reader, these lines from *The Hours of the Planets* depend far too much on ambiguity, and on implication and word-play. There are many hints, but too little actual meaning.

The series of poems in prose form, descended evidently from André Breton and from the *Journal of an Airmen* in Auden's *The Orators*, are clearer and more precise. But at the same time, they belong less to Mr. Madge.

There are, however, the eight *Delusions*, the first of the *Countries of the Dead*, *Fortune*, *Division of Labor* and *The Loves of the Lions*, all of which are the real thing, even if imperfect. It is unfortunate that Mr. Madge did not choose to include in his first collection two very fine poems which appeared in *New Verse: Thoughts of an Outpost* and *The*

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Lull. But there is enough for real excitement, and lines like these have the force and immediacy of all good poetry:

Where are the dancing girls? They are not here.
Not here? Then back into the night again,
The night of images that disappear
And reappear to mock the tired brain.

We have no home. Our bourgeois home is wrecked.
We seek instead the shadowy consolation
Of glimmering alcohol, and still expect
The unexpected of our own creation.

For we create—proud tyrants of a moment—
Bright visions, born between despair and fear,
And, in possessing them, survive our torment.
Where are the dancing girls? They are not here.

Samuel French Morse

IOWA IDYLLS

Country Men, by James Hearst, with a Foreword by Ruth Suckow. The Prairie Press, Muscatine, Iowa.

Mr. Hearst in this first book exhibits pleasant virtues and significant defects. Honesty of intention, sincerity of address, restrained dignity of attitude, and a thoroughgoing respect for traditional verse forms, are qualities of this new poet that need to be nourished and given wider working scope in future work. The defects require immediate correction, and, where they are misplaced virtues, need understanding and exercise in their right functions.

The defects that at present damage Mr. Hearst's work and need correction result from a tendency to confuse sentiment and emotion, an apparent willingness to write though

lacking compulsion in real creative need, a failure to realize meaning beyond appearances, a too glib resolution of emotional inquiry, and a too facile use of rhythm and rhyme. Defects that are misplaced virtues arise from a misapprehension of the limitations of word and metaphor, a misunderstanding of the true activity of narrow but legitimate qualities of personality, and, in a few instances, an uncertainty of taste.

Mr. Hearst's virtues and both classes of his defects appear together in many separate poems. The poem, *Inquiry*, must serve as typical, for it combines enviable qualities and important faults in an instructive way. Beginning with a sensitive and moving first line, it descends to a forced description of growth in the second: "Shoot thundering into the yielding air." The third line creates expectancy and then disappoints at its end with an inexact colloquialism: "These are crocus blooms the root has hounded." The second stanza intends to develop a striking winter scene; but it is marred by the imaginatively untrue when it is suggested that snow "might strike like a snake/At the open ground." The third stanza begins with a forceful exclamatory line, but is soon damaged by overstatement and a confusion of possible functioning: "Beat up the blood in your heart and bleed like a tree." The fourth stanza, quiet and movingly simple in its first two lines, is rendered unbelievable by its last two: "And see the sun arch his back like a bee in a rage/As he sparkles the air with clouds of his yellow pollen." But the last stanza is all to the good, not neces-

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sarily in itself, but in that it is true to the original conception and because it is stated without straining after effect.

Farm on a Summer Night, though better written than *Inquiry*, is illustrative of sentiment replacing emotion and the consequent failure to achieve an individualized realization. Prayers are seen as arising from the eaves of houses as "starlight flows down to the earth." The poem, *Mad Dog*, in which the sun is described as a "great yellow dog" that "laps up the water in the creeks," is symptomatic of uncertainty of taste as well as of misapprehension of the limits of metaphor. Personification has its uses; but it is best used in connection with ideas and objects for which few apt descriptive tools exist. Mr. Hearst seems an indifferent metaphysician, and he would get better results if he would describe the natural scene, which so deeply moves him, in its own terms—in terms of its being and action.

However, such faults as these, though damaging, are expressive of talent. Mr. Hearst obviously feels that these images should fuse into a meaning beyond that provoked by their mere assembly. Lacking adequate preparation, surrendering to impulse and slighting the needful period of brooding, Mr. Hearst is required to force meanings he does not see or feel. He is sensitive to words and their colors. He needs only to permit them to arise out of need rather than out of desire.

Such a quality as whimsey, while important to personality, needs to be understood as to limit, place, and statement, lest it become ruinous of talent. Whimsey mars an otherwise

You a Idylls

sound set of verses in *Reflection*, wherein the last line is almost absurdly anticlimactic.

I shall have this to recall when green
Seasons are grey and days are thin:
The infinite wonders that I have seen,
And the curious person I have been.

Discrimination between whimsey and coyness is obviously a necessary task. Other poems spoiled in such a way are *Blue Again*, in which "the little red pigs/Were beside themselves and ran everywhere"; *After Chores*, in which a "lantern goes bubblesway bubblesway/flick-flick-flickering"; and *Sparrows in Spring*, in which "the sparrows wink and teeter along the eaves/intoxicated with their own gossip."

It is in such poems as *The Grail* and *The Movers* that one sees the most effective proof of talent. In these Mr. Hearst rises above his uncertainties and produces moving and memorable poetry. Particularly is it *The Grail*, with its purity of speech, its deep feeling, and the solemn dignity of its effect, that gives firm basis for anticipating excellent future work from Mr. Hearst.

C. A. Millspaugh

SACRED AND PROFANE LOVE

Four Walls, by Laurence Whistler. Macmillan Co.

The Emperor Heart, by Laurence Whistler. Macmillan Co.

It is significant that the first of these volumes opens with a poem entitled *Four Walls* and that the second concludes with a group of sonnets and inscriptions addressed to four English castles, "a windowpane at Campion Hall, Oxford,"

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"a pavilion in a garden," and "a bed at Blagdon, Northumberland." In each instance the notion of sanctuary recurs to shut out, almost hermetically, "western death" and "the European wind." Mr. Whistler's concern is not with the expounding of texts "To cure a great world of its modern sorrow," but with the need for asylum from the world and palliatives for its sorrows.

Unfortunately, his solution is no more resourceful than that of the wise chick in the proverbial downpour. "Holding breath to see Petrol of Europe by a naked fire," he retiresindoors, bolts the shutters, and extinguishes the lights.

Lovers can only put their lips together
To fill the dingiest and narrowest room
Wash-stand and bed and gloomy glass
Full of the sweetest glory of all time.

His is a peculiarly *indoor-hedonism*: all has been trundled to shelter behind walls, surrounded by a series of inner chambers, and made in readiness for a ritual of sacred and profane love that is the more disarming for its complete purity of heart. The dedicatory plea: "Oh keep me chaste in action!" at once suggests De la Mare's "Keep innocence!" and, on the face of it, similarly resists condescension; yet its dignity of intention is time and again betrayed into absurdity in passages like the following:

I climb into my bed and all my fighting's done
And having no white arms to go into,
I go unarmed into the sheets alone,
Wishing, through all my wishing, to become
The blissful prince again that I once was
When I kept palace in my mother's womb.

Sacred and Profane Love

or, less than a page farther: "we who are the eloquence of youth / Seek only to be soundless babes again."

The shelter-concept, if pursued with Mr. Whistler's complete candor and good-will, must finally come to rest in some such apotheosis of the womb; nor is one startled to encounter it later in the guise of the earth-mother:

O put my arms about the vernal waist
And close my eyes upon the immortal womb.
Rest, rest, distracted frame, against the core
Of all this darkening love that is your home.

Even more characteristic, however, is the manner in which the poet has engrafted religious imagery upon secular frames, in the attempt to achieve the "chastity of action" of which he speaks, and which is defined somewhat Jesuitically as "the bright eye of unbetrayed desire / And the clear voice of passion." Passion for Mr. Whistler is at least tripartite, and shifts with no apparent embarrassment from the erotic to the maternal and from the maternal to the paschal. Thus, it is not only "a craving deep / To go that voyage to another room / And twenty years to a forgotten womb," — a quest for the "angel mistress" and the "infinite mother"—but is also an "Easter voice," a ritual of "redemption" by which the pure in heart may "approach from kiss to kiss the gorgeous Mass" and so share a "simple supper of our ecstasy."

In justice to Mr. Whistler it should be added that the love poems, which are many, engage the attention as much for their frequent fecundities of language as for their curious amalgam of the sacred and profane. Both volumes, moreover, reveal occasional lyrics of more than ordinary freshness

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on themes of death, antiquity, and the English countryside. At his best, the poet proves himself capable of writing with as much sensitiveness and distinction as any of his youthful contemporaries, although he is not beneath gaucheries like "mouth crushed in cream of kisses," and "fume-soft rush of star-crowded hair." *Four Walls*, we learn, was selected from among "many hundreds of volumes of poetry" for the King's Gold Medal Award by a jury of distinguished poets; and *The Emperor Heart* carries the kindly endorsement of one of the judges, John Masefield. Apparently, the status of prize awards is identical both in England and America — which relieves the present reviewer from the disagreeable necessity of offering any further comment on the matter.

Ben Belitt

WHITMAN IN AMERICA

Whitman, by Edgar Lee Masters. Chas. Scribner's Sons.

Because there is a sense in which Whitman is the most neglected of American poets, it is time no doubt that he were given some close scrutiny by American critics. I do not mean that he is no longer written about; there is a formidable bulk of commentary upon him year after year, a sort of writing around his life, his times, his relation to Emerson, his fictitious six children, his sexual nature, his last days at Camden. While I cannot qualify as a Whitman expert, I am sure that little literary criticism — if his followers will concede that such a thing exists — has ever been written

about him as a poet apart from his rôle as prophet. Even Mr. Santayana, in the best estimate of Whitman ever written, was interested in his "philosophical" views, not in the poetry as a contribution to an art. The monumental work is, of course, the immense book by the Frenchman, Jean Catel; it contains the best analysis of the esthetic value of Whitman; but there is no reference to that work in the new biography by Mr. Edgar Lee Masters.

Whitman is suffering the neglect that usually follows the achievement of a great name in literature; he is unusually difficult to write about because his prestige is due almost entirely to semi-political and semi-religious enthusiasm. Mr. Masters himself sees that such a reputation rests upon infirm ground: "Whitman's vision of America is big if America is big. If America fails he fails; and the defects of his performance in that case become more evident. He was a prophet, and if not a true one he must stand on his utterance as poetry." If I know what Mr. Masters is talking about, he means that unless America achieves a fairly complete Whitmanian democracy, the judgment of events must be unfavorable to Whitman's reputation. Mr. Masters contends that Whitman is better than Browning and Tennyson even as a "literary poet," but the evidence that he brings forward to support his argument (which may or may not be valid) is simply a reassertion of the glory of Whitman's "national vision," accompanied by the false assertion that neither of the English poets had it. So far then as Whitman's future reputation lies in the hands of Mr. Masters, it may be said that

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he will have none; for although the cause of democracy may not yet be defeated with us, the cause of Whitman's "dear love of comrades" never had any chance, and the value of "his utterance as poetry" is a problem mysterious to Mr. Masters, who refers to it occasionally but cannot keep his mind on it.

This book is the most curiously muddled performance that it has been my duty to attend for about ten years. There is no question but that Whitman's defects were shared by many of his contemporaries, both here and in England: Tennyson particularly succumbed to the temptations of literal prediction of the future, a kind of political whooping-it-up in verse. It was a general defect of the nineteenth-century poets that they based much of their performance not upon reality — through which the incidental and sole kind of prophecy may be achieved, as it was by Dante — but upon propaganda. I should not insist that Mr. Masters accept my all too inadequate suggestion of the nature of this problem; but I do think that we are entitled to ask him to be aware of it in terms of his own. He is aware neither of this elementary question — elementary in any discussion of a poet like Whitman — nor of any other problem of literature whatsoever. Here is his summary of Whitman's philosophy:

Whitman saw in nature, beneath all shows and appearances, spirit and creative thought. This was the only absolute substance. He kept saying that he saw this. Good and evil, the opposing forces of positive and negative, were as the waves of the ocean which are contained within its body. . . .

That is the quality of Mr. Masters' intellect, its quality at

Whitman in America

its best. It is a mind that reflects at the mere level of uncritical absorption all the libertarian ideas of the early Nineteenth Century: at that level the ideas are not the equipment of a critic, and the biographer of a poet must be a literary critic before he approaches the poet's life. It must be said that Mr. Masters tries valiantly, if incoherently, to present the unpleasant side of Whitman's character, nor does he spare him criticism of his limitations — as he conceives one of them, for example, in the following passage:

He saw that the objection to the nude, and shame of the body were of Asiatic origin, without laying his hands directly upon the Bible as the source in American life of those preposterous prejudices. . . . When giving Jesus the great preeminence [over Socrates] that he did he lagged behind Elizabeth Cady Stanton, an American product of the same times as those which produced Whitman.

It is a curious fact that a book as good as *Spoon River Anthology* should have been written by the village atheist.

Allen Tate

SHANKS DISCOVERS POE

Edgar Allan Poe, by Edward Shanks. Macmillan Co.

Mr. Edward Shanks is a poet and a critic. He is also very much of an Englishman. And the combination, in his case, has produced the type of poetry and of criticism that we long ago were familiar with in the writings of Sir Edmund Gosse, and that has of recent years again been brought into nauseating prominence in the writings of Sir John Squire. These critics, from their vast eminence on the leather-covered seats of the Athenaeum and other literary clubs

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("It is only the clubs that have ever produced any good literature," once observed Sir John Squire) have long since acquired the habit of bestowing their patronage on outsiders. As Dukes and Earls and Knights of letters, they can and do always unbend from the contemplation of their own loftily perfect creations to give a few pats on the back and an occasional scolding to an American. Their position is secure. Now that the last English outsider, D. H. Lawrence, has been dead these seven years, and the few others — Wyndham Lewis, Roy Campbell, Ezra Pound — are either silenced or in exile, Squire and Shanks and their ilk are the undisputed masters of English literature. In order to escape from their insidious influence one has to be born a Scots Nationalist or an Irishman, to proclaim oneself a Communist or to give up the idea of writing for an English audience altogether. Mr. Eliot of recent years has not escaped — nor have the Sitwells.

Mr. Shanks has now delivered himself of a book on Edgar Allan Poe. The book tells us nothing that we did not previously know. It tells us that here, in America, we have never been able to see Poe for the great literary artist he was because he borrowed money, drank, and acted absurdly — but that in France on the other hand, where Poe's works and influence penetrated at a time when no one knew anything of his life, he became the spiritual parent of an entire school of writers — a school which completely transformed French literature from 1870 down to 1914. Mr. Shanks is quite right in saying that Poe, not Baudelaire, was the

Shanks Discovers Poe

first great Symbolist. He is quite right in pointing out that had Poe not written as he did, neither Baudelaire, nor Verlaine, nor Rimbaud, nor Huysmans, nor Villiers de L'Isle Adam, nor Maeterlinck, nor Remy de Gourmont nor Paul Valéry could have written as they did, either.

All this hath been told us by men of old. Anyone who wishes can buy Emile Lauvrière's carefully documented and scholarly-phrased book, at a price lower than Mr. Shanks' book, and learn there that Baudelaire had been reading and absorbing Poe in great doses as early as 1847, when still a young man. And Baudelaire, as all the world knows, is not only the first great French symbolist, but among the three or four greatest poets that France ever possessed. The only thing that Mr. Shanks has added to available information about Poe is that, in a barbarous country such as America, Poe was *necessarily* absurd. On his second page, Mr. Shanks quotes with approval Sir Edmund Gosse's remark, "If we were to call up Poe as a social character of his age, he would probably rise before us as a ring-tailed roarer at the great meeting of Water-toast sympathizers," to which he adds, exquisitely, this reflection: "It would be possible to give a plausible account of Poe in which he should appear as a comic character, as something of the nature of Zephaniah Scadder in real life." I have not read *Martin Chuzzlewit* recently — indeed I see no reason why any American should have ever read it at all — but I can assure Mr. Shanks that I appreciate the force and the indelicacy of his observation. Poe's life was undoubtedly comic in the America of his time;

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as Baudelaire said of the albatross, when he descended from the vast spaces of the sea to the ship's deck, "his giant wings prevented him from walking."

The English have a strange sense of humor. They never appear funny to themselves, except occasionally when they license some jester like Bernard Shaw to give them sport. Their own literature, their own art, their own statesmanship, they have taken with portentous gravity ever since Queen Victoria made a laureate out of Tennyson. They pride themselves on their craftsmanship, their moral dignity, their honor and their honesty. As a matter of sober fact, they have few of these qualities. Mr. Shanks' book is ill-written and badly put together. He wastes pages describing Poe's attempt to write a novel, and has little to say about the poems or the tales, except incidentally. And then always with the avowed purpose of finding flaws in them. As a sample of his literary judgments I select this: "Mr. Yeats, the one really great poet of the 'nineties, has a little confused the issue by his intimacy with the mythology of the Celts, but so far as *indefiniteness* goes, he is today the sole heir of Poe's vast estate." One would like to suggest to Mr. Shanks that if it were not for the effort of certain Irish and Scotch and Americans, and other outlaws and barbarians, there would be no English literature now at all. There would be nothing but the sort of stuff he writes, on a par mentally and spiritually with the speeches of Stanley Baldwin and the remarks of the Archbishop of Canterbury on the wedding of the recent king of England. *John Gould Fletcher*

Correspondence

CORRESPONDENCE

POETRY has received from David Schubert the following account of the Poetry Craft Session of the National Congress sponsored by the League of American Writers in New York in June:

"Today in America there are signs of a literary revival that may resemble or surpass that of the period from 1912 to 1916. . . . Those of us who remember the hopeful activity of those years can also remember how it was cut short by the War. And we can see that the promise of the 1930's is threatened in a still more definite fashion" In this way the Call to the National Congress of American Writers opened, and it was in the shadow of the Spanish War that the Congress met, to present a united front against fascism. It was neither Archibald MacLeish nor Ernest Hemingway, but rather Earl Browder, who at least implied that *writing* might be the action of the writer. The reels from Joris Ivens' film, more than any of the speeches, realized the terror of the mass murders, and the heroism and sacrifice of the Loyalists.

At the Poetry Craft Session Horace Gregory, the chairman, spoke briefly on the new consciousness of humanity that is being voiced in the work of certain European writers, on the similarity and influence of Kafka's imagery in the poetry of W. H. Auden, and on the necessity for a departure from the limited imagination of naturalism. The discussion that followed was of great bitterness, but unlike other sessions, here the writer was at least audible. Several attacked or defended the "unintelligibility" in Auden's poetry with arguments often either irrelevant or simple. There appeared in general a cleavage between those who would discard all experience and technique not related to the immediate life of the factory worker, and those who would extend existing techniques into order, in the midst of disorder and confusion. Certain fashionable clicques were uttered: the lyric is dead, the need for new objective forms to contain the progression from the ego to the mass; but there was also much skepticism. In spite of a consideration of the poet's reading and writing, and the desire for clarity and formal structure, there was little recognition that successful paraphrastic writing would itself be a token of a mastery of experience, as great as that gained from the discipline of action. The concern with what

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the poet should read seemed essentially a search for ancestors, who are certainly more the possession of the Right, with its worship of blood, and who are most living when least mentioned. Unfortunately there were too many beginnings to explore any idea, but the different elements were reconciled in a committee to provide for an anthology, a literary magazine, and to attempt to enlarge the space given to verse in the magazines.

A poetry reading over WOR was sponsored by the Congress. Present at this broadcast were Horace Gregory, Genevieve Taggard, Louis Zukofsky, and Robert Fitzgerald, all delegates. Among those at the Poetry Craft Session were Sterling Brown, Louis Grudin, Sol Funaroff, Alfred Hayes, Ruth Lechtiner, Walter Lowenfels, Willard Maas, Carl Rakosi, Eli Siegel, Genevieve Taggard, Jean Starr Untermyer and David Wolff. Rolfe Humphries presided.

Although the Congress was not entirely a *National Congress*, it was nevertheless a tribute to the unanimity with which American writers, those present as well as many conspicuously absent, have rejected fascism. There were few signs of a literary revival.

David Schubert

COMMENT

The October number of POETRY will be a Twenty-fifth Anniversary issue, and will mark the magazine's achievement of its first quarter-century. It is planned to signalize this event with appropriate manuscripts both of poetry and prose, and to review POETRY's record since it published its first number in October, 1912. We hope the friends of the magazine will take part in this occasion by sharing in our efforts to make another quarter-century possible, and by extending in every possible direction the knowledge and purpose of this journal.

The Macmillan Company will publish late in the summer *The Collected Poems of Sara Teasdale*, and Harcourt, Brace & Co. is planning to fill a long-felt need by issuing the collected verse of E. E. Cummings, most of which has been out of print now for a decade.

To the volume of *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association* for 1936, just published by the Oxford Press and numbered XXII, Louis MacNeice has contributed an interesting essay on *The Subject in Modern Poetry*, Ernest de Selincourt a paper on Coleridge's "Desjection," and J. E. V. Crofts a study of John Donne.

Comment

The Pell Studio Press of Norwalk, Conn., is planning the publication of a series of *Poetry Signatures*, each to contain a number of hitherto unpublished poems of not more than fifty lines each. Payment cannot be promised for the poems, but it is hoped that remuneration will be possible "in the not too distant future," and no signature will be issued "until we have selected for it poetry which we believe to be the very highest type that America is producing."

Writers' Editions, Box 750, Santa Fe, N. M., announces as its next book *The Life of Saint Rose*, a biography of the Peruvian girl who became the first American saint and the only American woman saint, by Marian Storm, whose verse has several times appeared in *POETRY*.

Marya Zaturenska (Mrs. Horace Gregory), of Bronxville, N. Y., is the author of *Threshold and Hearth*, published in 1934 by Macmillan, who will this fall issue her second collection, *Cold Morning Sky*. She was awarded the John Reed Memorial Prize by *POETRY* in 1924 and last November received here the Guarantors' Prize. She first appeared in *POETRY* in 1920.

Mr. Axton Clark lives in Ross, California, but is spending the summer in Leadville, Colorado. His book of verse, *The Single Glow*, was published in 1933 by the Villagra Press of Santa Fe.

Kathryn Worth (Mrs. Walter Clyde Curry) lives at Nashville, where her husband is on the English faculty of Vanderbilt University. Her first book of verse, *Sign in Capricornus*, will be published this fall by Alfred A. Knopf.

Hildegarde Flanner (Mrs. Frederick Monhoff), of Altadena, Cal., is the author of *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929), and received here the Guarantors' Prize in 1934.

Mr. Raymond Holden, of New York City, is the author of *Granite and Alabaster* (Macmillan, 1922), and of several novels. He is now finishing another novel, and a new book of verse will be published next spring by Henry Holt & Co.

Mr. John Wheelwright, of Boston, is the author of *Rock and Shell* (Bruce Humphries, 1933). He has contributed both verse and criticism to *POETRY*, as well as to *The Horned and Horn*, *The New Republic*, and other magazines.

Mr. Carl Bulosan lives in Hollywood, California. Mr. Richard Leon Spain lives in Rogers, Arkansas.

Miss Agnes Moore lives in Brooklyn, N. Y.; she graduated from Vassar College.

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

The new poets in this issue are:

Mr. Robert Morse, of New York City, who graduated from Princeton in 1928, has studied art in Paris and is a portrait painter in New York. He contributed a series of essays on French painters to *The Symposium* and has reviewed books for *The Nation*.

Miss Martha Millet, of New York, has contributed to *The New Masses*, *The Daily Worker*, *The Labor Defender*, *New Writers*, and other journals, and is an office worker.

Mr. Ralph de Toledo, of New York City, was born at Tangier, Morocco, in 1916 and now attends Columbia University, where he is on the staffs of *The Columbia Review* and *The Columbia Jester*, and received in 1936 the Poetry Award of the Philolexian Society.

Mr. V. James Chrasta, of Los Molinos, Cal., was born in Nebraska twenty-five years ago and works as a rancher. His verse has appeared in *The American Mercury*, *Wings*, and other journals.

Mrs. Clara Williams Smith lives in Kansas City, Mo.

A postal accident which prevented proof from reaching him caused Mr. Edmund Wilson's poems in our July issue to appear in a form which he had not approved. The group title, *Land's Edge*, and the two titles on page 187 were supplied by the editors in the absence of any headings on Mr. Wilson's manuscript, and an error in his manuscript caused the words *Lights enter* to be printed in line 21, page 187, instead of *Light enters*.

BOOKS RECEIVED

ORIGINAL VERSE:

Conversation at Midnight, by Edna St. Vincent Millay. Harper & Bros.

Prismatic Ground, by Marguerite Young. Macmillan Co.

Poems, by Etta Blum. Golden Eagle Editions, N. Y. C.

The Untillable Hills, by W. W. Christman. Driftwind Press, North Montpelier, Vt.

Water Meadows, by Grace Buchanan Sherwood. Wings Press, N. Y. C.

From Fallow, by Anna R. Maskel. Bruce Humphries.

Poems, by Evelyn Couchman. Priv. ptd., Oxford, England.

Great Adventure, by Frank H. Woodstrike. World Pub. Co. N.Y.C.

PLAYS AND PROSE:

This Room and This Gin and These Sandwiches, by Edmund Wilson. New Republic.

Harlequins in the Burlesque Tradition, by Edward Ames Richards. Columbia University Press.

New Directions Poetry

POEMS 1929-1936 by Dudley Fitts, \$2.00

"One of the few American masters of modern verse forms."

—Archibald MacLeish

TWELVE POETS OF THE PACIFIC

edited by Yvor Winters, \$2.50

A group of young poets writing in the classical tradition.

NOT ALONE LOST . by Robert McAlmon, \$2.00

Here is McAlmon at his best—an individual perception and poetic idiom that set him apart from any other writer of his time.

And a novel of enduring value by a distinguished poet:

WHITE MULE . by William Carlos Williams, \$2.50

"The action evokes so many of the sights and sounds of life that we are stirred at every point by remembrance."

—New York Times

AND

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1937

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An annual anthology of experimental and creative writing, edited by James Laughlin IV. Ready November 15th.

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